The Cenacle

Number 47 December 2002

Season of Lights
Pioneer Courthouse Square,
Portland, Oregon

No way out but through.
—Robert Frost

December 7, 2000
10:46 a.m.
NE Prescott Street
Portland, OR.

Dear Mother,

I'm sorry it's been awhile since I've written - the past seven weeks in Portland have been difficult at times - I wanted to broadcast happy tidings when I felt I truly had them - not yet but a need & desire to write you nonetheless

I've been living in a boarding house in North Portland most of the time I've been here - a strangely furnished room in a large trinket & memento-filled old house - $80/week, it's clean & safe - housing in Portland is much cheaper than Boston or Seattle but I've not yet been ready to make that commitment - ground beneath my feet still solidifying -

I've spent my daylight time here sometimes working short-term jobs, sometimes jobhunting - Oregon has highest unemployment rate in U.S. when not long ago it had lowest-

Portland, as I allow it, feels more like home than Seattle did, or Boston the last few years I was there - I've made a few friends, done some writing, lots of walking - sometimes I'm happy-

Yet still my situation is precarious - I am writing to report my progress but also my leaps - I didn't know that thrice in my 38th year I'd be asking my family for money - yet here I am again - asking - I've no idea if you could help me a second time - or would wish to - but I feel like I'm getting somewhere finally - there's at least one possibility I'm working on that could change my situation entirely - I just need to keep at it - patience & perseverence fueled by time & money -

I won't be back East before year's end but wish to & have to by early next year - please tell all the family I am well, on the beam still, & send my love - I hope my next contact brings you authentic good news sprung from the hope I bear now - Your love & support have often held me up, more than I can easily say -

☮ & ♡, Raymond Jr. ☺ 12-2000

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Accompanying cassette features highlights from the December 30, 2000 & March 31, 2001 Jellicle Literary Guild meetings, both held at Roma Restaurant, New Britain, Connecticut.

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Thank you to Barbara, & to Sean for straight up loyalty, & to Portland for its comforting moments even when many things hurt...

RAYMOND SOULARD, JR.

Blue Period [a new fixtion]

Not a story, not a song, but begin.

Not a train, rumbling here, but get on & ride.

Neither blue clouds over empty football fields, nor tingling pink-cheeked yesterdays, but pray.

The desolation trees in their smiling Buddha-hoods, empty & invisible, and Bickford's nearby serving "Pancakes & Family Fare."

Not on a train, passing over a river, rippling diamond motes, blue clouds and Buddha-hooded trees, thinking: Time is my own soul inside my own fist; freedom is what I wish I didn't have to enact; love is blood, love is unnecessary; and Art speaks all Creation in a tall horizonless monologue.

Blue Period. No doors. Just sky.
No souls, scattered all around.
No tears, dark seas of them.
No dreams, no maps, ton-heavy.
Nothing at all. Here & Now. Rhythm & lights.

Ton-heavy, nothing at all, here & now, rhythm & lights, Who are you, I really want to know: listen!: near America's thigh, where secrets & slip peek out, the poetry orgy tumbled in the streets, several poets arrayed in a diamond, juggling tennis balls & rhymes in blurred joy?

the musician mounted his leering redhaired muse & together, coital, they floated on air currents down America's riled coast, riding his muse, searching for his true love, guitar strapped to his naked back, love the best poison of all, Socrates, but you knew that when they handed you the cup, didn't you??

Some years ago, a long-haired idealist turned off the radio news, closed up his copy of Buddha's Sayings, adjusted his vision & locked in his soul & picked up a heavy black instrument from his bedside table, an instrument he'd had for a couple of months, adjusted his vision & locked in his soul, picked up his heavy instrument & confessed to it his crummy story, all who & what he had lost, adjusted his vision & locked in his soul, picked up his heavy instrument, dressed in what was left, waited for the sunrise, there would be no more good days?

Elsewhere, the here inside nowhere & everywhere, the dead dancer woke up & smiled. It would be OK now, all doubts gone, irrelevant. He felt decades younger, several hungers wider, ready now to begin, ready now to continue, ready now to resume the old work, all that had ever really mattered anyway. Had to find the others right now, the now in nowhere?

And me? I can only watch you from far away, it's how I love best—but you are real and your needs need touching carnal borders, the nearness that is broad & empty, the farness that pelts the ground constantly—

Will be the catalogue of moments, will be the cacophony of sensations, will be the trees blossom-demur early spring and carnal-theistic a couple of months hence, will be the tapping, the listening, wander & woe

it all looks fine

to the naked eye
but it don't really happen
that way at all
sacrifice to the moment-place, to the now-here, and as always, the need to stagger forth, the kiss recedes, the high from several bright words in April to the harder, twisting catharsis of the few, or one, left by June or July—

Never walking the streets tonight, chatting with cars that attend Harvard or BC, Never sad for some reason but a good price, an easy lay, will help.

Who are you
I really want to know—

Trains rush & tumble, oh sure, how many passages will be writ on this familiar rumble? Oh sure—

Words fewer now—
Receding—
Who the fuck are you?

A plan? Always a plan. A list, a chart, a blueprint. The ease of not knowing, what the notes do not say, plans a joke really, notes, more accurately, about how much will happen unknown to now—

trick to keep juggling while walking, while ticking, while waiting, re-invent & re-invent & re-invent & re-invent
doubt my favorite diamond
fear my only potent icon
love like blood, like ice,
patient, wild unnecessary
Art?
Look at the distant lights, remember the wine, kiss remembering air

To continue. In doing so, to begin. In beginning, to imagine yes: pen hits paper; yes: paper receives, retains; and yes, this is what I must do right now, this is all there is to do right now.

There I was on the train, and I had myself a philosophical puzzle. What does it mean to be home? Is home not a zero or a one but a tendency toward a zero or one?

I've been home in some strange places & not very home in some obvious ones.

I'm home right now, here, this table in this courtyard in this place, writing, longing after curves shaded by mystery & smiles that run from young to toe. I'm home with my walkman fulla latehippyrockmusic. This place has been my home for years whilst my legal address has changed again and again.

A handshake. A kiss. A poem. A night. Home sometimes not a place but a dream. The sadness when a drink-sodden pair of eyes before ye, trying to tell like then, is no longer a home of yours.

Homes, gone, that continue to haunt. Homes found on night highways, speeding to cranked Led Zeppelin, the driver trying to say awake, trying to care.

Home perched on a breast's nipple. Home the toddling steps of blood before everyone got old & failed & entropied into yearly greeting cards, live pieces of that gone home summed in a sentence, if at all.

Death as home? Perhaps. Some regard it so I don't know. Burying the body, its spirit fled, seems instead the moment when the soul stops differentiating, & all creation is once again his home. Homeful & homeless, both, no paradox.

This story a home, this fixtion. But like that psychedelic trainride, those thoughts, this night, this pen, home is not a noun but a verb. Activity, sensations.

Sadness a home. Travel a home. Love, of course, a home. Music, the vast, necessary kind, certainly a home. Beauty. Godd.

The past & future not homes themselves but how one chooses to decorate the eternal, infinite now-here.

The buzzing brightness of a girl's smile as she tells love tells delight tells absolute now-here her companion yes, yes, yes, yes.

The peculiar mechinations of chessboard warriors, mathematical eyes, tapping, shifting

Cars, go-go. Persian newspapers. Litter leaving the light. Cops joke, smile, lean, snap & unsnap their gunholsters. Much money bebopping around Harvard Square, purchasing nothing for most, disposable illusions, legs readying to spread, clocks ticking hard.

And a story awaits telling, down in a city called Hartford that does not really exist, and in equally quasi-existent places with names like Seattle and Macon. Boston. Cornish. Picasso. Time. Chicago. Woodstock. 1968. Orpheus. Kafka. Rock and Roll. Ruby Virgin. Merry Muse. Emerson. Acid. Now. Here.

Thighs and stars. Orgasmic relief, finally, and sadness, of course.

Carnal Street. ZombieTown, Mass. Jack Daniels & Guinness. Lead guitars, bass & drums.

Girlgodds, tick-tock.

Yes, a list but, barely, a plan.

Smoke a Dunhill. Or an American Spirit. An Avanti, if you like sucking on smouldering branches.

A story, this? Or a shipwreck of words, perhaps?

Perhaps what I need is the girl-next-door, religious icon hung around her neck, a nascent taste for cockjuice in her mouth.

Yes—a subscription to the Blowjob of the Month club. Shiny pass to the staterun whorehouse that Amante recommends to calm America down a bit. Or rile her in a better way.

It's starting to rain, how wonderful. The lithe trees above my head are Ok about this.

I just want to crack this night open and climb inside.
I'll be her virgin. I'll be her whore.
Take me, Merry Muse.
Take me, take me.

Here comes the rain, harder. Tick-tock. Now the secret wetness of this night is exposed. Yah h h h

i. Anthem of the Sun

Dream.
Saturday.
Not yet, arriving.
Years ago, youth, & still.
It begins here, now, there, then.
Astral presences.
Cartoon bunnies.
Surely more.
Wait.
It takes at least 3 a.m. to talk
about 6 a.m.
Undifferentiation.
Now. Then.
Here. Now.
Drop a tab.
Kill the wabbit!
No 3 a.m. No 6 a.m.
Calm down.
But it's all acid!
The whole fucking culture!
Life magazine.
MK-ULTRA
Psychedelic cigarette ads.
TV. Film. Music.
Me, I'm just delivering the morning papers. Me, I'm just crying under a crown of trees. Me, I'm just sitting on the steps of an abandoned building. reinvent & reinvent & reinvent

ii. Tomorrow Never Knows

It is almost certain that, on this trip, we became lovers. We became, because of how it happened, a continual loving, I am Rebecca Dorothy Americus. I am Ray Soulard Jr. both are true. Here's how.

It began with talk, in her room. I said it's always been wrong Rebecca said is that why because Rebecca not a one saw fit to wait to study foreplay that began before we met I never really had a boyfriend I'm sorry Rebecca,

No.

I sat up and she released me unwillingly. I have a poem you'll like read it's about a painting I saw I want to see it too OK listen.

iii. Obey Your Inner Voice

Watch a story collapse, hardly a dozen pages in, nothing's been said yet tho there are notes & plans & diagrams & so on

Not a story, nor a song, but a surrender

Not a train, rush-hour slow, but jump

Neither talky dusks amongst lingual taxis, nor a necklace struck & pushed to the ground, but fuck it all

Fuck it all, there's nothing here to pray to, no Godd between the cracks, no dreams preserved from last night or any others before that

Fuck it all, to survive faith must blister itself with cash, must choose its mate from a scrutinized lineup of candidates

Fuck it all, just pay me, I don't do the good shit without a down payment. You want'em wet & weak, a disoriented herd, easy to trap & pluck? Pay me my fucking money!

iv. Breakdown—It's Alright

I was on the train to Heaven, halfway there, when the acid hit & I wondered if I was finally home yet, it could be worse

But it could be worse, I thought, I could be back at that damned commune, on the night when everyone was gone on mescaline & they decided to teach me a lesson locked me in the meeting room with every woman in the place, every last one, naked, on the floor, ready to prove to me that the Dream was right & that it wouldn't die & that I could never leave it, not fully

Even Suzann Valentine, even her, redheaded bitch I really did want to make, want to love. The only comfort I got from the whole trick was that she wouldn't look at me. Sure, her legs were spread like the rest, she'd agreed, she was ready, but she wouldn't look at me

Fuck you all—every last one

v. You May Say I'm a Dreamer

but I don't know what I believe in tonight. Can I convince anyone that there is hope, that it's high time to try again, anymore than esteemed souls warn me that we're all fucking doomed—not by giant comets or lizards or dreamdull UFO invasions or even fleshconsuming viruses, but doomed because we just don't ultimately care enough about anything anymore to stop our eventual disintegration?

If this story is to have anything worth shit in it, it will contain battle-tested hope, covered not with blisters but with blessings, helplessly hopeful, a story written because there was no choice.

Despair & fear hit us hard with our own fists precisely where we are most vulnerable.

Someone takes his pants off & the rafters knock. . . Long Live Rock!

So I have to keep dreaming . . . I'm not the only one . . . can I convince anyone of this?

vi. Time Keeps on Slipping into the Future

Sometime in the next two months I am going to be with you my true love & we are going to be here again just like the old days I'll have found you & retrieved you & not failed & you will blink into the daylight, holding my hand but not remembering maybe just liking my smile & enjoying my strength & here we come into this place that is for a little while what the world was for a little while & I will leave you at my table & take my place far from you

to sing to you & I will know that there is one note, here, tonight, if only I can find it, that will cleave you to me forever perhaps if only I can find it will cleave perhaps you to me forever tonight forever awhile forever 1! 2! 3! Play!

Blue Period [a new fixtion]

Not a series of notes tho damn if it doesn't seem so

"Are we a band or a flippin' orchestra?" cracks Cecile Grey, Noisy Children's balding punk drummer, restless for the rhythm, for the damned tune

A guitar flies directly at his head, he ducks, it hits the back wall & cracks hard

Meanwhile, Soulard was in the old manager's office, slowly unzipping her jeans, poking in with tongue & fingers, more interested in steering her breaths, knowing what to do & how, words & fingertips, tongue, touch, press release

Not a train but a fullflag cock in a good girl's drinking mouth, love a pair of gently manipulating hands, love focussed upon the doing, love beyond pride & modesty, love manipulating with hands, love sucking truth from a ready member, sucking dubious notes, sucking harder and harder, rhythmic wind, mouth genius, a good girl's drinking heart

The resurrection trees in their ecstatic martyrdoms, pointing toward the burning church & indicating that nothing worth anything can burn til all of these, all their kind of whatever shape or color are burned down, wrecked, rejected, cleared & cleared & cleared

Good girl on her back, smiling & ready, Resurrection, Now, are you ready? Good girl painted pink right down to her small toes & virginal vaginal lips

Resurrection, Now. Are you ready?

The story has begun, oh yes, put on its pink anklesocks & filled its pockets with holy water & poker chips, reported its movements to the Cambridge Morality Authorities, readied its every cliche for the bonfire to come

It's 10:52 p.m. in the known universe—what's happening everywhere else? Here, a girl smiles and adjusts in her seat, white shorts & long tanned legs. Her companion figures he'll be getting some tonight, does a little dance as they leave

This story will fail again & again, I suspect. I thought it would go like this—but it's even harder than I'd feared

Let me set the battlements on fire—we're stuck with each other—
is there no help for the hopeful?

i. The Over-Soul

Not faith in a moment, none, but here we all are, gathered in the chamber of quiet stars, with our vices & our habits, not faith, no, but something is happening right now, & responds like a trueblue canine to our decision to act, not faith, no, human life is mean, our ground is distressed beneath us, discontent ripples up our legs, not faith, no, but what of the stream within each of us, source unknowable as a stranger's grimace, source as obvious as the soft, feminine skin of a spring evening in love?

There is a story here, oh sure, and its places & names may be told right now, to assure, to rile—

The fallen castle in Cornish, New Hampshire, the memory hanging like lovely, killing Spanish moss from its every surrounding tree of a moment 30 years or so ago, the day before the the when today began to begin, the moment when the Phalanx immolated, held, levitated, still whole, began to steer, to realize, to become, when the universe & its many quiet eyes appoved it, tried to help, it burned for a good long moment—

learning to ride the moment, Richard James Americus extended into the air, awoke Dream, threatened whirling damnation on real or imagined forces that would stop him, was at last granted his beast, granted his tunnel, love dirty & round, love hot rain, love wedged underneath breath & shoveling into each inhalation a demand for a chance, a demand for resurrection, now—

It couldn't last when she demanded that the Goddpink leave the walls and cover every soul dancing crazy & drunk in Luna T's bandroom to Noisy Children divine electric pricks of sound, she wanted every last soul coated in Goddpink & glowing, she wanted them to know as she had always known, she said it was time, pretty, prophet, now—

On the blue beach she sat on my knees, facing me, & we each demanded proof of the other I said aloud 'I love you' and nodded to our audience of surfers & students & goldseekers & Confederate ghosts that they echo my words & I looked at her and she'd taken off her bathing top & her soft candy breasts waited, each a godd agreeing, finally, to be worshipped—

"Saint Stephen, with a rose, in & out of the garden he goes, country garden with the wind & the rain, wherever he goes the people all complain!" bellows Dr. Arnold T. Knickerbocker, & slams **KRAK** his walking cane on the bartop at Luna T's Cafe. ***"And I complain, saloon-keeper, of the casual & nearly feminine disregard in this ee-stablish-ment of the adequate heat & quantity of my beverage!"***

"One man gathers what another man spills," observes, amused, the thin dark-haired man sitting next to Knickerbocker.

"You sir, are very near to shaking with your rapturous outbursts of foolishness," observes Dr. Knickerbocker more calmly.

His companion takes a lingering sip of his glass of Glen Fiddich, remarks upon the coming of the noon hour and observes: "We live in succession, in parts, particles, division, make language out of the cracks in the whole which our senses doth instruct us exist. Meanwhile, within each of us is the soul of the whole, the wise silence, the universal beauty, neither heated nor chilled, day nor evening, to which every part and particle is equally related, the eternal One."

"Yours, sir, is the philosophy of the street urchin, the carnival hustler, the bedamned female who tries her only talent at convincing some lost man-creature that her metaphorical mate is the thornless garden rose, sent by our Lord solely to service & delight his eye!" Dr. K yelled and would have slammed down his stick again had not Mr. Bob the Bartender come up from behind him & snatched it in mid-descent. "Enough, Doctor, or I vow I'll put on the television to the Bible Belt Channel."

Dr. Knickerbocker grumbled a profanity.

"In five minutes is the season premiere of 'Our Lord, Who Art on TV.'"

Knickerbocker's friend chuckled & sipped while the Doctor himself said nothing surrenderingly—

Dream. Saturday. Not yet, arriving. Years ago, youth, & still.
It begins here, now, there, then.

Astral presences.
Cartoon bunnies.
Beep-Beep!
Surely more.
Beep-Beep!
Wait.

It takes at least 3 a.m. to talk about 6 a.m. Undifferentiation. I know the time. Now. Then. Here. Now. Drop a tab. Kill the wabbit! No. 3 a.m. No. 6 a.m. Calm down.

The acid's not working.

The universe is still here. Up there, that is.

Boy, I say, Boy!

It's all acid, yes, even relatively conservative TV space operas.

Me, I'm just delivering the morning papers. "Morning in America" they announce & tho I am 17 I know better.

I know the stage is empty & the curtain is crashing down in ashes.

So come on out. You! Soulard! Asleep! Standing in the bathroom! Which reality this time? Come on out & discover it!

But I don't want to. I'm at home in here. If I come out, it all begins again. Waking. Sunrise. Lovers, come & gone.

I just want to be a mouth on that beautiful girl's breast. I just want to be pressing wind inside her sandy thighs. I want to be monarch inside her orgasm, rule it & ride it as it leaves this lesser place. Or maybe just her black panties, made of me, me a tongue pressed hard & smoothly against her careening pussy as it travels between & among eyes & mouths & fingers & cocks.

Beep! Beep! Windy darkness, watching.

Beep! Beep! Innocence, thick & spreading

Beep! Beep! A square rottenhearted fuck on a perfect, uncaged night, the enjoyment of the rash that wildeyes him into clawing his own balls off

Wile E. Coyote, hungry, floating away from the Earth, saliva thick in his mouth, knife & fork in his paws, fur shivering in the solar winds, come finally to the small planet of the Little Prince, smile, chase, capture, smile, tender skin torn from thin bones, eaten sexually high, & after that that damned flower for dessert

"The intercourse of society—its trade, its religion, its friendships, its quarrels—is one wide, judicial investigation of character" observes Mr. Ralph Waldo Emerson, switched to sipping gin, Beefeater.

"I want a little prince!" complains Cecile Grey, each hand gripping a pitcher of stout. "And make sure her friends fill D-cups, OK?"

It's Saturday morning tonight and I'm watching many cupped & contained & upheld friends in this windy, shadowy courtyard. I'm imagining naked friends littering the Road Runner's desert chasing highways, fat, full D-cup friends amongst which Road Runner must beep-beep! & race, alone now, Wile E. Coyote travelling some faraway galaxy these days looking for more little planets of princes & flowers

What's this all about, Soulard?

It's Saturday morning everywhere tonight as friends go wheeling by, nipples confessing interest in the moment as it leers & recedes

No way back, Godd dropped a tab & made Saturday morning while peaking

ii. Aphrodite, on a Barstool

Who set the room afire, I don't know, she was smiling, but I was taking off her clothes a button & snap at a time oh hell I just ripped off what I couldn't reckon & there was gasoline but she was breathing cock & I was singing pussy & at some point a match & outside the ocean could not believe and moved closer and closer whelming the small pool & there were flames when she finally got on top & eased me inside her & she began talking about how good it would feel to be my final ash, among my final ashes, how she'd finally have me & I wouldn't deny her n'longer & the ocean was brutal & impatient had to have us flesh still, continual woe, ocean beat the shit out of those flames & took me & took her both, didn't fucking care, the only real rule, far more interested in the jingly noise of our flesh than any ashy content we might desire

iii. She got legs, knows how to use them.

All he brought was his guitar, I said all he brought was his guitar because that's really the sum of him, in the end, his guitar strapped to the back of his Harley-Davidson touring bike, some paper with some words, and some clothes but you see the words & his music have been ever thinning of late, so there was no choice in this, not a gentle romantic gesture but a clenchedfist growl of desparation as he'd been told by his friend & former lover & eternal bassplayer Gretta Black as the ferry upon which they sat crossed over Puget Sound & the pint of Jack Daniels between them diminished is how he was already feeling at that moment, needed Gretta to be hard on him because she had loved him hard & she did her best not because she wanted to but because it was how she said "I love you still I love you still! fuck! shit! I love you still—"

They sat in a sheltered smoking area in the rear of the boat, the night & the whiskey & the need every inch of each's skin to sniff & claim the other's huddled them together as they talked stop! listen!

"Why aren't you in Georgia?"

"Neither are you."

"Schoolg—I mean Franny's there—"

"You mean Schoolgirl."

"It's just a joke, Rich. How your hoary old band copes"

"With our increasing age versus the constant need I show for college girls"

"Fine. You'd think that, wouldn't you?"

"Yes"

"Rich, we're all getting old but you're not! Not just your girlfriends, but you. You've never let up on what we all wanted 17 years ago!"

Wind snaps open doors briefly, dances bright & heavy paws around for one moment, door closes, Gretta's dark hair resettles, tingling from her eyes' harsh copper flicker.

"She's dead, Gretta. You know that."

"Oh come on Rich! When did any of these stories contain such definitive facts?"

"I came here because I've never seen Seattle. We never played here. You never even suggested it."

"No. I decided to keep one thing from the band."

"I came here to see you because I miss you. And I'm sorry for hurting you."

"Why do you keep apologizing?"

Americus stands & Gretta is brought along in his wake & together they step outside to one of the ship's back wings. Land nearby on both sides. Still, between breaths somehow, floating on eternity still.

"Gretta, what you don't get is that I saved us from me. Love for me is a candle. It's bright and it's pretty and it burns out."

"You need a bass player."

"I need a friend."

"And me?"

Suddenly collected into his hand, suddenly a listening leaf, he swallows her whole, lays her out nude upon his heart, within its cavern of rippling shadows.

"You're mine, Gretta. You know that. No reason to deny it for either of us anymore. I own you in all the ways that really matter. However few there are. You're mine."

"I'm yours."

"I do this to women. That's why they run. That's why they don't really ever get away."

Now she's back.

"Gretta, I'm yours, too. I came to see you before I went to find Franny. It seemed important. But you have to tell me why."

Seattle strange spined Emerald City sharp & funny, moody, sentimental, nearly at peace, grows in the distance but at the boat's rear nonesuch, comfort nor time.

"What? Tell me!"

"Rich, it's going to be hard. You know that. What else?"

"Tell me."

"The more you try to get her back the more everything you love will be in danger."

Rich laughs, broken glass & bottle caps.

"Next stop, See-atel, home of the Mariners, SuperSonics &, every few years, the poet Ric Amante!" loudspeaker.

Gretta nods & smiles. "I read his book. It's good."

The night is soft chocolate & everything they do confirms present joy & coming peril. Gretta knows every good bar in Seattle—even better she knows every great bar in Seattle.

Keeps telling him as they drink onward that the best one awaits. The several Guinness tease of the Pioneer Square Saloon, the back room of the OK Hotel, called a ballroom tho dark & roughly electric tonight someone makes a move on the other & they are fish & they are water but wait, onward, another joint grafitt'd, thick carved up wooden benches & fuck beer when there's whiskey in this world, getting closer, & at some blurry point in a cab hailed sloppily from late evening traffic he finds himself making out with a girl in a cab, bound for the Blue Moon Cafe, some ways from downtown Seattle, over by the College & something about her skin & her touch something unconfident & therefore elusive, something about Gretta's undeniably dark hair now blonde between his fingers & it seems that joy & peril are now become a second couple on this night's liquored ramble. The cabbie gets $20 for watching the road & finding many a dark street to get them from Pioneer Square—or was it Capitol Hill?—to the University of Washington area—but at last here it is where poets like Roethke & Amante are smart enough to come when they want the night stripped bare of every veil.

A booth amongst bikers & books. A pitcher of Ipswich Ale, divine sewer water, & the music is hard & denoting.

Frances Emily Renée Salinger, of late dead down in Georgia, won't meet his eyes. But she is soft & alive & here & so fuck it. They talk alongside a continual kiss.

"A viper took me, Rich"
"Did you fight him off?"
"I'm doing that right now"
"Where's Gretta?"
"She loves you."
"How real is this?"
"Yes"

Someone pulls back & thus eyes. Better off before. This is true even if it isn't happening.

What of this night, for a moment leaning back, for a moment not knowing wherefrom or whereto. Seattle, Cambridge, some Georgia ville where Franny learned to blue.

Give each some rain, some wind, a bar, a courtyard, a church, a very small church

little Frances asked by her minister what her favorite part of the Bible is replied the Book of Job why Frances because it happened even if it isn't true

& I am in Cambridge tonight missing Franny missing Rebecca looking at sleek femme packages hurrying, folding, laughing, leaning near me til my pen growls & there isn't much here that is new but still I believe enough to hustle onward

but there is a Psalm, Franny, you know the one & how it is your wedding vow even if you are not true & you are not happening you're just a splendidly conjured curve of words when Gretta started talking back there awhile somehow recovered to herself been had in most ways a bookfilled biker bar will allow without every heavybellied grizzle wanting some himself.

But he doesn't know—you're Gretta, you're Franny, you're Merry Muse, it doesn't matter to him it never did & now less so even more

sometime later in an alley you lean him against a wall and kneel down and unzip his jeans, yank it all down & while he watched the Space Needle tickle the blue night you touch & tongue & taste his cock, bring it forth knowing he's watching the Space Needle & probably thinking that every city should be like this every night all whom you've lost return at once & you pay with your willingness simply to smile & submit—

iv. Above the trees where Billy breathes

What a little of all we know is said, mark the angle of shadow covering the particular hue of smiling cheek. What drops of all the sea of our science are baled up!

"Another, pal. Yah, the same."

Doubt not, O poet, but persist. Flagellate the cold, imperious night with wordy, carnivorous blows until there is a softening, a smile, a submission. Stand there, meanwhile, baulked & dumb, stuttering & stammering, gun a cock but hammer a doubt, hissed & hooted, stand & strive until, at last, hand holding her willing, bickering-mongst-themselves curves, rage draws out of thee that dream-power which every night shows thee is thine own, she is carnal covenant, a power transcending all limit & privacy, and by virtue of which a man is the conductor of the whole river of electricity while still hardly a passenger when her love finally wildeyes into this world.

Blue Period [a new fixtion]

Not a beginning, but a continual singing, a story hurrying to arrive here, from here, a now that reinvents & takes, a now inside her yawn, filling it with something necessary & good, something her companion Manley K. Mooz can watch but can't stop, she is licking & nibbling, she is groaning & becoming a chain of storm-frenzied rivers, she is becoming necessary the more she drinks, writhing & she pulls it in deeper as pathetic Manley K. Mooz watches, the flowers he's holding, the box of edible orifices his bright idea, dimming, he's not learning that she wants it all, she wants it all on display, on parade, tall shiny music, wants something or someone to be big enough, worth submitting to, she wants to be owned but only by the fiercest bee in Godd's swarm—

Not a train rumbling here, but get on & ride, but only if you are ready

—Resurrection, Now, settle in, friends, are you ready?

Neither blue fields atop empty clouds, mathematics + mortality = music, nothing present but a colloboration of vibrations & ideas, nothing more important than one's decision to continue & how never sure of the certain way that there is not we will

get off the train where your doubt has summoned madness where you have been surrounded where suddenly the story & the pathetic joke of costumed reality have collided—

great. stop.

Chinatown T station. Boston, MA. Acid creating its own strange spaces & some of its users crazy enough to step off into the city while using it.

And sooner or later something will go wrong & one's ability to steer will be challenged

Fucked with on the train, fucked with by the train, deciding, essentially, that Boston's train system is choked with ghouls & entropy, malignant humming souls & homeless, carnivorous entities. Another train long in coming soas to be especially full of crushed persons, spewed sickly & harsh back into the daylight—

A baby dancing with a balloon, the calm breathing of certainty from here there is only only further, only onward & Beauty punishes doubt left wildeye when it gets difficult

Not on a train crossing the sky but a train contrived unnaturally from within earth, a train crossing the sky would acknowledge what cannot be: no souls, blue & rising

no tears, but the ones on your back at dawn

no dreams but all this now every tanktop, March for Jesus, Ocean Spray, pink flamingo last bit of it what does not fall away is the dream, what we cannot sell or taint or forget is the dream—

i. Mount Dream:
Learning to Ride

This is as likely a hillside as any, as beautiful, & being here Soul Meshed With Flesh, Spirit Mixed With World, well anyway OK today what I first need to tell you is your approach sucks. There are no paths there—you'll have to imagine & contrive your way there—but there's no train nor bus no map or starchart or scripture or papyrus of rites or law or dance or language or music or craft or breast however soft like a home or embrace there Mount Dream: Learn to Ride firstly learning to boil & bathe one's own mere flesh what you've got by way of legs & eyes & heart to get you there that's first

naked, singing undifferentiation
that's whereto if not whereat

but begin on this hill at the end of this century beneath a sky that has always waited for those who will stop looking around & start looking in, doing it well enough & deep enough to nick a fragment of something off the wall, something now noticed, now inspected & suddenly more of it what's always been there awaiting discovery & discernment & what story there was on these pages is again heaving itself into the air of this day—its greens & blues reds & oranges—the galaxial experimentation of some musicians bent on dressing up aurally the air & its colors

> oh why can't he write
> normal & try & sell
> books like everyone
> else?
>
> why all the wasteful
> insistense upon autonomy
> & self creation?

More pussy, more money, an easier passage through life available to the person willing to go along able, I suppose, to go along, when some of us can't how dearly do I wish Americus's lover Franny was still alive & my girlfriend Rebecca could at last, finally give her everything to me, be mine entirely but that would involve being again the sheets before they were stained & she was invented

ii. Mount Dream: Flying Better

He didn't fear anyone would slow or stop him on his way to her; he received help, advice, soup, offers to go elsewhere, promises it would be more fruitful to do so, but like in Seattle she would keep reappearing before him such that he would either chase along or be dragged

> Franny—yes—Franny—
> continuously
> bells & manuscripts

iii. Mount Dream: Aloft, Above

She droops, frosted with dream, a pink & warm sentient thing, far more than my tasting estimation of her; she sinks into the praise-dwelling night, a slender silence, a raucous universe, watches the shining sky through the skylight above our bed, holds the hand of her boy, her groundling prayer; I am shades of want aside her cheek, her carrier, her song of flight, a bend of words, a forest, a hand, we face each other nude, shift, kiss; we are runes, revolution, loving waves combining; she won't let me go, this is her most religious hour, this is why she is here, she has come to keep me, she is insisting on my carnal divinity, holding me inside of her, now, this is real, I am being had; her mouth presses my mouth with a message, a small pill, no two, and we suck mouth and acid together be my Valentine be my

lonely Valentine be my only Valentine she thinks we can own each other no matter what happens tomorrow when daytime comes to the Haight, she thinks our visible selves are no matter compared to what she's thinking of—

iv. Mount Dream: Aloft, Alone

He knew that once he & Rebecca began kissing that they would never really ever stop, that however many months or years from now she would still look at his mouth & shiver deliciously & he would never really see her with clothes again they would each remember the mattress on her apartment building's roof & Luna T's manager's office & the various benches in Wildfire Park & Cement Park & the time on the train to Boston when his head beneath her skirt, licking slowly while she laughed, kept the whole crew of Amtrak personnel out of the train's last car

They began collecting museums & churches, & different kinds of weather & when they were most well-behaved it was that she was drawing pictures of what they'd been doing in a bathroom or behind a bush or in the library an hour ago & he added words, lodged them in orifices and balanced them on nipples & merged them into his long red hair or her long brown hair

It became easier not to talk, to sink wetly into each other's sand, to forget there was a difference, to learn to trust & learn to steer release identity when together, retrieve it when apart—

v. Mount Dream: Live Music, No Cover

Luna T's Cafe was slowly discovered by the hippy kids from the local college. Mr. Bob the bartender let anyone in, merely refusing booze to those under 21.

They wanted to see Noisy Children. They were impatient. Even when he let the musical ones play on Luna T's stage on Thursday nights, it wasn't enough.

"We know" they said. "We've been waiting" they said. "It's our turn" they added. "We need them to show us how" they finished, pouty.

Mr. Bob frowned, wiped down the bartop, fetched them sodas.

vi. Mount Dream: Resurrection, Now

There is so much hope right this moment: pay attention. Be Here Now!

Money, war, poverty, loneliness, none of these need exist. We've got nature to guide us, science to build the path, spirituality to keep our hopes ascending & Art to ensure that all souls are welcomed & the final picture will cohere around all.

We've got the wisdom of our history to assure us & the follies to help us see a smiling sham, whether person or idea, the moment it mounts the podium & commences manipulating lights & words.

There is hope. Paradise is all around us, half-built.

The high notes can get higher. Sunsets & full moons are free for all.

We can arrive. We can be in tune.

Blue Period [a new fixtion]

Perfection. Absolute perfection. There couldn't be a moment better the wind & shine passing freely from the doorway at one end of small barroom to & through doorway at the other end.

Men at the bar, barmaid behind the counter, a glass of Busch beer is $1.35, "All in the Family" on TV, My Brother's Place, Stuart Street, Boston, on my lunch break. A hot dog for $1.25.

What does this have to do with the story ongoing here? Tables. Jukebox. Bunkers spending their Christmas alone. My temp job paperwork awaits me in about 10 minutes.

Pinball machine. Red Sox 1998 schedule poster on the wall. A board sign of cheap sandwiches next to the TV full of lonely, sad Bunkers.

Bags of rolls. Many bottles of hard liquor. What does this have to do with the story ongoing here? Payphone in the corner. Something unreconstructed here. Many things.

i. Mr. Bob Wiped down the bar

& studied news of the Red Sox shutout loss to the Baltimore Orioles the night before. A longhaired truck driver bored with the television slips some coins into the jukebox & some heavyhipped grooving Led Zeppelin launches into the air—

"and you will be mine
by taking our time"

& the crazy doctor pays none attention to Led Zeppelin, Archie Bunker, losing Red Sox or curiously superimposed bar from Boston

down on the page, or above the page, both, sunshine, breeze, glass of beer
Mr. Bob settled back with his bar-rag & sports section—

Stepped into the bar at this moment the tall preacher of earlier pages, now clad in a bright Red Sox jacket & smiling uncalmly, heavy the untold tale upon his back.

"Dr. Emerson, what a thrill!" said Mr. Bob heartily, laying down a freshly polished spot for a coaster on the bartop but not presuming the doctor's choice of beverage this so early in their acquaintance.

"Cold water, friend. I beset myself with quite a walk these past several hours. My fortune was stoutly good, however, when a carrier of freight relieved my weary legs," Dr. Emerson veritably smiles his way onto his seat.

"Nice jacket, bud," Mr. Bob quips.

"Obtained with minimal fee at yesternight's thrilling base-ball match in Boston."

"But they were shut out! The manager & that young Valentin were ejected!"

Dr. Emerson shook his head, smiling more broadly. "A trifling. One cannot measure the true worth of these great, average men in such a reductive vein."

Mr. Bob shook his head, glanced over at his sports section. "Dr. Emerson, some would call you a fool for a remark like that. Me, I know that the Red Sox haven't been champs since after your, um, original life & before my own. I'm going to need your thoughts on this matter quite often this summer, I'm afraid."

The good Doctor smiled & gulped at his water.

ii. Real Stories of the Highway Patrol

"I was almost on that show once" announces one of the scruffy workmen at the bar, dressed in lumberjack shirt & jeans. Puffing on a Marlboro, sipping a mug of Schaeffer.

"What happened? The camera break?" cracks another.

"Right after I fell into it!"

"You weren't meant to be no star!" cries a third.

Dr. Emerson is smiling at all this while Mr. Bob is trying to explain that since last they met the Red Sox crushed the Orioles 9-1 & this was a fundamentally good thing.

"Indeed" he nods.

"Saberhagen got the win after two bad starts!"

"Yes, friend!"

At this moment, the bardoor opens & in steps Rebecca Dorothy Americus, full of her plans.

She sees me & how I will not fully enter the scene, how I am superimposing wherever I am over the place. Luna T's Cafe is riding along a Boston subway train right now.

She frowns at me, not meaning to manipulate me, succeeding in this. Now she & I are in a crowded train, the Cafe gone.

"Ray, what's wrong?"

"Doubt. Heavy cream doubt."

"It's hardly begun!"

The train empties some but she remains pressed hard against me.

"Ray, you know how these stories are. You can't control them. You can only write them."

I want to kiss her but don't.

"Why?"

"This isn't about my fun."

"Of course it is. You love me. You said that. It's true."

I want her hair to turn red. This would help a lot. It doesn't.

"I told you I won't. You can't call me Becky & my hair isn't going to be red."

She's mad now. She's trying not to be. But she hates weakness of this kind.

"Isn't it bad enough Franny's hair is strawberry blonde & now she's dead?"

"I'm sorry."

She hits my shoulder, hits it damned hard.

"What?"

"You're not sorry. You're trying to write & be weak at once. Just stop it. I can't help you here. I can't defend you from this. You know I would."

I blink & she is gone & I am still here. I know this will make her madder but too fucking bad.

I have to do this right. Alone.

iii. I want to write words like a forest of pinkcheeked dream-music, eternally arriving here & now from here & now

The day's final color, its bitterest blue, outlining objects with a hard line, things in blue ice, and I am falling through these pages to its considered failure, to what it can't be no matter my trickery.

Faces are lit up like empty bowls inside candles inside a night that cannot stop ending.

Invisible eyeballs nods Emerson & I close him inside a book

The breakdown of particles in the expenditure of energy the hope that a beautiful thing, small & ready, comes forth

Stop watching me! I'm just a girl! They're just breasts!

The news of the day announced that the king & his queen would tour the pond, slowly

could they get away with a midnight swim, taking the blondehaired young page all of them nude, the page fondled within by kingly sceptre & without by queenly conjunction? No verdict. rock on

It is still Saturday morning everywhere in the universe tonight & I still do not want to come out of my bathroom safe inside my ZombieTown hovel, still I remain & thus this story remains behind this door

I am on a train inside this bathroom, tired, tired near to undulation, should I continue writing this? Is it necessary?

When does experiment in consciousness topple into incoherency?

The only way is on, further, call it faith or stubbornness or perhaps obssession, there isn't any choice

I don't know any other way but trust & self-immolation. This train is full of people who are no more sure than I am—and some are less sure. As much for them as for myself, trod on—

iv. Woke up in a Soho Doorway; Policeman knew my name

Franny is dead. No. Franny is dead. No! Franny is —
No. Can't be. Take me instead.
Franny is dead. John Lennon is dead. Dr. King is dead. Michael Gregory Americus is dead.
Ghandi is dead. Buddha, Socrates, and Christ, too.
Timothy Leary is —
"No! Fuck you! She's not dead!"
She died on your wedding day. From the bite of a viper. Chased by a jackal.
Americus slams down his shot glass and hits my shoulder, hard.
"We're not married! She's not dead!"
What can I say? "Rich, you're married to her. She's dead. I'm sorry."
"What are you pulling?"
"Nothing!"

"Look, I'm tired of you."

"Whose fucking fault is it that she left! You let her go! I couldn't make you do that! You decided."

"She decided! She left me!"

I keep thinking that Luna T's barroom will coalesce around us but it won't. We sit bubble inside a mist of nowhere.

"Rich, she didn't want to go but she did. And she died down there."

"How?"

"I don't know."

"When?"

"I don't know. I don't know where, either, not yet anyway."

He stares at me until I am being clawed inside my mind.

"But I'm going down there."

"Yes."

"To find her & bring her back."

"Yes."

"For good?"

"I don't know."

He doesn't get mad at this. "So there's a chance?"

I nod. "But you know that it's not what it seems."

He nods. I don't need to say anymore.

"By motorcycle?"

"For awhile. Then, later on, by Muse."

"Great. Who rides who?"

"Yes."

v. Not a train, rumbling here, but get on & ride

Was her name really Suzann Valentine? Could any mother have marked & blessed an infant girl so?

She wouldn't say much about it. Even when we were high, sitting crosslegged inside each other's eyes, nothing remotely confessional slipped out about it.

I was too happy with her in San Francisco to really care too much about anything tho. When I was in Chicago, tho, Suzann long gone, I began to remember. By the time I got to Woodstock, I was half a manhood gone

Suzann, I'm thinking of you tonight, as I look at this gun & enjoy its weight in my hand, its power over me. I will use it or not use it but I know that I will not finally decide this. It chose me. I acquiesced.

You chose me. I acquiesced. But eventually I failed. A weakling, I ran.

It's never so easy as this. Bullets in the chamber, as this. Snap it shut, as this. Suzann returned to me as a .44 automatic, as this. The buddha says all life is suffering, as this.

The Buddha sat beneath the Bo-Tree, shaped like a temple, waiting for illumination, sweaty & corroding. The Buddha was willing to be bullet, chamber, muzzle, trigger for Godd's will.

All life is suffering. Take me, Suzann. Everything is Nothing. Is. Take me, Suzann! I've licked all the sweetness from this life. What remains is powder, springs, & cold metal.

vi. Talk Psychedelic to Me

Leave the title of this section for last. Trust. Trust! That's the only chance, the only hope one has of keeping atop the water, learning to steer, learning to sink & levitate as well.

Luna T's Cafe and what it will be like this summer. What it is becoming like. Something other.

Stumbling here. Slow down.

The search in this life for safe perches, for welcoming nests. For places resembling home, some ideal, a place whose welcoming hands you can still see even if you're a thousand miles or months away from it.

OK. Follow this further.

Looking for patches of geography we can trust to house our sacred heat. The dwelling, the pairs of hands, the nearby trees, the set of ideas we can call home.

Luna T's Cafe. In particular how Rebecca Americus is evolving her belief in it & deciding she must lead it with her farther along.

She tells me more one night tho the location of our talk is the Cafe Democracy courtyard. Near to where the Arcadia Bookstore & Cafe stood until it burned down.

She's not mad at me tonight. Sometimes, like Emmitt, I grab the ball & fly touchlessly.

"Do you understand what I want to do there, Ray?"

"Some. Not all. Perhaps it's better this way."

"Meaning?"

"I don't control it. It's yours."

Slapflash of brown eyes & I am kicked tho she hasn't moved.

I sigh. Tackled behind the line of scrimmage.

But then she smiles. "You're cute when you're befuddled."

I'll mention that to Aikman the next time I fumble. "Thanks."

She edges her chair closer to mine. I lightly stroke her long brown hair. She's dressed in leather jacket & jeans, pink blouse, peace sign necklace I gave her. We twine hands.

"Tell me, Beckah."

"Ray, you've got to write this properly. Your way. You can't pretend not to know me."

"I need to leave you a space of mystery & choice, Reb. It's how I am. I love you. I want you to surprise & delight me. I don't want to be right all the time."

"Sometimes Emmitt Smith only needs a couple for the first down & that's what he gets, right?"

I grimace.

"Ray, your notebook is on the table."

I nod. "It's an elaborate story going here. And I'm afraid at just how much it is about failure."

The cool late spring night is now speckled with rain. The area reserved for chessplayers has emptied. The tables around us are emptying, too.

This section concludes as I set this pen down & attend to kissing my young love.

The softness inside a fierce embrace. The loneliness of every thrusting mouth.

Don't leave me, Rebecca, not yet. I'm not ready to pull back from you yet. My fingers shiver at the welcome your body's touch gives them.

We have to love through each other to the other side. We have to ride out this trip.

"When are you going to kiss me?"

Disappearing into the moment. Within, gone, learning to continue.

Blue Period [a new fixtion]

Tonight I am doubtful. No rhymes. No tricks. Just doubt. Wishing the Master was here to comfort me, hold my hand, if only for a minute. But I am alone except for enterprising spiders & rumbling freight-trucks. near midnight, June 16, 1998, steps of Rohm Tech, Carnal Street, ZombieTown, Mass.

Canal Street, Malden, Mass.

Tonight I am tired & I doubt & there is no Master here to comfort me & then fling me back into the game.

Just me & Doubt & weeds & humming lights. UFOs & evergreen trees. Wet copies of the Boston Globe. 68 pages of this story & doubt & more & more doubts.

In service of Beauty. In service of Art.

Watching my street crowd with lines of souls I do not welcome.

Raindrops & the odor of bread from the factory a block over. An unseen plane moans overhead, fades.

Doubts. Fucking doubts.

No way but forward.

No escape from the necessary.

Approaching, receding from ideas embodied in moments, places, books, faces. Schemes involving seconds, & cities, spiralling colors, high music, a man's desperate drunken hand extended, a woman's back arching impossibly as an orgasm is steered lava implosion through her torso.

Reinvent & reinvent & reinvent & reinvent. Trusting the ragged & the knobby. There are glass cases everywhere in this hotel. Westin Hotel. Copley Square. Boston, Mass. Telling of them to. They contain bits of jewelry. They contain plastic torsos dressed in bright rags.

Boston Globe, again. A hurrying dish of jailbait, one especially with perky, needful breasts. A careful book about artistic improvisation. Earlier, a lounge piano where Chopin might have been.

And Rebecca Dorothy Americus, my browneyed girlgodd, sitting in a soft green-striped chair too, near me, drawing me, I am falling into her page, I am emerging, too. This same hotel where near a decade ago I was present with another lover. Rebecca knows I am remembering. She isn't jealous. Unlike that old lover, she trusts me & she respects herself. She just wants to make love again. Somewhere new. I look around. The gift shop perhaps? Behind the registration desk? Rebecca moves around in her seat, still drawing, but she also steers me with her eyes.

More. Always more. The world is a banquet. The world is a legend. There is the soft buzz of an artificial waterfall nearby, near the escalator. Moving shadows. Grimaces. Reading glasses.

Learning to steer—

Another moment. Another place. Sometimes steering. Sometimes something less clear.

An S on the train away from Boston, pinkcheeked kindling, where hunger seeks to feed, where hunger is watched, is charmed, led to laughter, taken bonelessly—

An S in this dark joint, its air mindlessly slams about, guitars, words, desire explained in 3 chords

An S of curved temples, scattered among invisible trees, dryads ready but the moment not crazy enough, fleshprayers undanced, dreams of carnal smoke

Trains rush & tumble, oh sure, how many more passages will be writ on this familiar rumble? Oh sure—

the night a happy, raving drunk at closing-time, slurring, telling you again, with fresh amazement, the story of his rotten or glad day, brightening or dimming life—

the night scarred with music & talk, with falling, with insistence on now tho the past complains and beckons! How the future looks fine in black!

Not a street, neither a path, but trudge along it
Not a night, electric gold, but seek its touch
Not entropy, not emptiness, Resurrection, Now
Tonight my back hurts but I am hopeful.
Tonight the local spider does not scare me like when I was high
Tonight becomes a boat, for my vague drifting

And, miraculously, from stumbling & cacophony, a story begins to manifest. Impossible endeavors of trust. Deeper than doubt is the necessity to accept that this is what it is, will thrust & drive toward a place, a moment, that it is right now, here, preparing.

Trust because doubt simply kills. Trust is dawn. Trust is what's left that none can bestow or deny another. Trust is a continual virgin. Renew with her.

Breathe in & out. Enjoy the breeze's lingering touch. Allow yourself to sway between trust & doubt. Now one, now th'other. Nod with respect to this moment's mystery. The best plan one can have is still flimsy. The best hope one can have is still naïve, nearly factless.

Stop trying to squirm back into the cage. You no longer fit.

i.

It's Saturday morning (tonight in the universe where I sit with my longhaired piece of painterly jailbait ("Hey! Stop that! I don't like when you say that! (watching her suddenly smile this morning when she knew I was watching her tho she had not opened her eyes (she is making a picture with her watercolors, part of a series called "Renewing the Virgin" that I suggested ("You didn't take anything from me! It doesn't work like that!" (She read my notes on the show I saw of Pablo Picasso's early paintings, esp. his 'Blue Period' pictures, & she read my poems too, and she went to the Hartford Public Library to find books of those pictures & near dawn recently she told me she wanted to do a series of pictures using Picasso's as a kind of pictorial template & we talked some more, the idea approaching (she enjoys most doing her pictures when we are touching somehow, our sides, our hair (sometimes this leads her into some wonderful new art, sometimes it leads her to drag me into an alley) and Rebecca has found me, is knocking on my bathroom door wanting me to come out right now.

It's Saturday morning (yesterday in the universe when Rich Americus appeared at Luna T's Cafe to let Mr. Bob the barman that he was leaving right then for Georgia, to find

out how to find Franny ("Rich, have you told you told Rebecca? (and bring her back from wherever she is ("Daddy, I love you. I hope you find her. She should be here with you & all of us (and fuck anything that got in his way ("What should I tell your band when they come around? ("Daddy, I know you don't get along too well but Godd the little pink bear would always help you if you asked" (my bike's gas tank is full and I've got my guitar & bag of clothes. "Tell them that I'll be back later this summer & it will be time to finish what we started back then. Tell them I'll be ready. Tell them I love them" ("Daddy, we'll all be here waiting for you. Don't worry. I'll explain things to people. I'll take care of everything here. Ray will help me. And I'll explain so it will be OK (Tell them I love them all) and Richard James Americus is riding his big touring motorcycle south, from Hartford to somewhere in Georgia, has driven all night but is not tired, is getting closer.

It's Saturday morning (and later Dr. Emerson & Dr. Knickerbocker engaged in quieter talk as the former spoke about the many deaths of loved ones he suffered while still a young man ***("Ignoble Sir! Why must you continuously attend to torturing with thy blasted blazing optimism! I come to this iniquitous establishment to have mine accumulating death amongst fellow sinners and whiskey and in peace!"*** (tells of his young hopes to be a minister, to write great poetry, to devote his hours of prayer & study & preaching to the enlightenment of his fellow Massachusetts men & women *("I too spent my brightest years of manhood in teaching & healing"* Knickerbocker remarks quietly (how later life left him bedazzled with its loops & problematic moments of burning ecstasy ("but there is an arrogance in young men that contains the very poison of corruption. Not all persons need healing. I rejected much that would not respond to the lash of my magic touch. I was a fool" (and his unexplained appearance in this place at this time bespoke his renewed desire to discover if aught good had come or would ever come) and Dr. Ralph Waldo Emerson arrives at Luna T's Cafe to share a few quiet hours with Mr. Bob the barman, discuss the of-late winning ways of the Boston Red Sox, sip strong black coffee, enjoy soft tunes on the radio.

It's Saturday morning (and it's not so long after an obscure poet died, alone, with little hope, no longer enough to sustain him anyway (there were still people in this world who loved him the night he died, but none of them were nearby, to stop the bullet, to debone the despair (and Suzann never stopped remembering her lover, their place on North Beach, the nights it filled with friends & music & drugs, when she almost convinced Davey with her bright love, with the frightening strength of her body, that it wasn't all over, that she didn't believe in too late (and his friend Cohn? He was successfully divorcing his wife and trying to divorce the oldness in his bones. Knowing now that Davey had been right, Cohn was repenting by more, or really less, secretly contriving a psychedelic hippy commune off campus at a student-run cafe, was collecting co-ed pieces of young ass around him, fucking them furiously, instructing them all, the boys included in that part too, in the use of LSD, mescaline, mushrooms, peyote, hashish & marijuana (and Americus knew that his friend David Time was dead & fully intended that Time's story would get told in the coming Noisy Children musical even as his pursuit of Frances Emily Renee Salinger would get told (Suzann didn't pretend to be young anymore, or particularly loyal to the ideas she & Davey had lived back in San Francisco in 1967, didn't discuss those days with anyone, perhaps once a year allowed herself to remember nights that summer in North Beach, or nights, tripping & briefly fucking free crazy as absolute happiness somewhere in Hashbury (and he continued to lecture but some thing, many things were gone—no longer a single sheet of lecture notes, a refusal to grade based purely upon tests & term papers & class participation—now a heavy expectation of a different kind—only the shrewdness of his inner circle prevented him from bringing sheets of acid to class, lamps with black lightbulbs,

a phonograph, copies of Cream's *Disraeli Gears*, Hendrix's *Electric Ladyland*, The Beatles' *Abbey Road* & expectations that the class would study the poetry of Allen Ginsberg & Emily Dickinson in the nude (doubtless Americus had his plan: he was going to find Franny & bring her back home, he'd marry her twice a week for the rest of his life to make sure she never left him again, and he would play the entirety of his new musical for her alone, acoustic guitar, and he would never cease smiling & he would make love to her continuously because this all was fucking doomed (Suzann quietly accepting that she could go on taking young lovers for the rest of her life without feeling very much except for the occasional lucky young buck, plucked from one of the classes at the Museum School that she herself taught, showed him a sexual maneuver she & Davey discovered that broke them together onto a new sexual plateau: "Suzann, I'm going to get deep inside you—" "Yes. Yes. Now. Do it." "And then I'm going to do this" and he presses his torso higher up on hers and his cock & her clitoris are now locked & moving in unison until

BAM!

BAM!

BAM!

he comes inside her so hard & she orgasms from so deeply within that they both start crying savagely & can no longer ever really, fully part again (and Davey instructed his current coed lover on the deeper sublimities of Rilke's love poetry as they sit in his bedroom & she is a virgin & scared of too many things to name so he smoothes her lovely blonde hair & feeds her a hash cookie & nibbles one himself until she floats, floats better when he has removed her blouse & unburdened her high breasts, floats best of all, near to the ceiling as he is beneath her, his cock deep inside her round smooth ass & disappears completely inside the come she swallows after she used her hands & tongue and long hair to get a wondrous stiffening of his cock (and Americus is driving faster & faster it seems his bike can fly and not another vehicle nor a cop & the road is empty & it has been night for several days now (and Suzann releases her still-potent need to paint by beginning a new canvas at dawn every day but leaving it off by when she sleeps that night but not declaring to herself that any one of them is finished or not, just keeps pushing herself every day to start something new & retain one day's worth of absolute loyalty to the work, each one for him, remembering their days together or perhaps reporting what little news has occurred in her soul since then) and David Time's poems still exist in this world despite the other details of his life.

It's Saturday morning (and tonight the college kids will be around again, wanting to drink tho underage, wanting Noisy Children live at Luna T's Cafe tho its members are scattered across the land (and Rebecca who does not fear will tell them to be patient, tell them the music is coming, will be better than ever (and they will like her tho she is only 17 but they find out she's the joint's manager so they then like her even more (and I will sit shadow at Americus's corner at the table neath the front window in the bandroom (coming in now, a group of them, some carrying guitars because Reb said they should (and could (and me sometimes drunk & up on the stage, at the microphone, shouting some crazy poetical shit into the air, waving my pitcher of Guinness around until the boys are crazy with jealousy until I corral a few of them to the parking garage roof above Luna T's Cafe for a passed-around joint or two (and Jim Reality earlier had briefly shown up and corralled a few of them to his car to share a pint of Crown Royal whiskey (and a girl in the group decided

Jim was going to play her that night like she'd heard him play "Emminence Front" the previous week at Luna T's, smashed on gin & Guinness (and something continues to open up at Luna T's (it's becoming more field of blooming weeds than commercial liquor establishment (what do you expect what with the Goddpink splathering all the walls and Rebecca dreaming of covering every one who comes in with it (that they will become contagious with uncontrollable urges toward Peace & Love in this world & contagious go into the world & spread & spread (and Jim Reality pushing the seat back a little further so his newfound friend can get her soft intending lips & mouth all the better around his cock (and on the roof me & a group of the young folk high as a divinity of hawks, me saying

Resurrection, Now

Resurrection, Now

Resurrection, Now

and the young fellows getting excited and maybe an eager girl or two amongst them eyeing me purposefully (are you kidding? I've got Rebecca Dorothy Americus in my bed! I've got brownhaired blueeyed bliss herself in my bed smiling & looking happy at me (and these girls had watched me earlier and thought more purposefully until they saw the fantastic sex Rebecca & I had just looking at each other (but marijuana makes every soul into an orgy convert (and later there will be much more for I can no longer write a story does not end with everyone panting & naked on the floor (and when is Noisy Children coming back? they ask Mr. Bob who pours drinks exclusively for those with 21 years at least of thirst in their throats & has learned to say much hopeful by smiling & moving on) and before even Mr. Bob the barman arrives today the old joint herself is delighting in her internal coat of Goddpink, is near to architectural orgasm, is high, young, spread, laughing, ready, ready.

It is Saturday morning (and Rebecca is still knocking at my door and telling me very softly of what she & I will do today if I come out (and I'm thinking of her body and how she owns mine with it and her heart & how I can heart it beating all the time now & her artistry & how I am free among her to keep doing what I've always done I just have to keep a touching border with her (I want to be with you all day today, my beautiful girl, taking those old 1981 Connecticut Transit busses to those long-gone movies & goodness how I hurt then without you, without your merest touch that now is more (blah BLAH blah (no listen I was in love back then but I had no chance ("Ray, please come out now! It's 1981! I promise! (and what a fool would have awakened this morning & instead of trying to merge with this girl whatever vibration we hadn't yet merged, would slip into the bathroom for a revivifying morning piss, shut the door to not wake her, and somehow not been able to leave, not for her, not for anyone, I missed 1968 & even 1981 is gone & it's 1998, perfection plus the utter grossness of additional time ("OK, fine. I won't make you come out. And I'm not going to be mad either. I'm going out for awhile to draw. See you later. I love you, Ray") and I finally come out of the bathroom because unless someone can convince me that all my years of loneliness just must go on that I continue to write, "I am not going to lose you, Rebecca. I can't."

"You can't."

ii.

Again, beholding my innermost maiden, won from the twin marauders Time & Doubt, she waiting, she open arms, she sits with me & waits. She knows how to sit & wait & how rarely I've had the treasured moment that is about-to-speak, about-to-act. She watches me, but calmly, lowering her flame, happy to be here, now, & in her waiting & in my deciding we are making the lyre anew.

"You're beautiful, Rebecca."

"Thank you."

"I love you, Rebecca. Not because you are young & pretty, an artist. Not because you love me." I stop. I don't know what to say. Magically, she waits. Neither retreats nor reassures.

We live together all of the time now. But that involves me being with her in Hartford some & her being with me near Boston some. Right now, we are sitting in my hovel in Mystic Side aka ZombieTown (between midnight & dawn) north of Boston.

She knows I am brushing near to a kiss but no. She hugs me, & rightly too, taking my wordlessness this way rather than befuddling it with the erotic.

Perhaps sleep. Under my old blue wool blanket on my single bed, eyes closed. Not sleep. Intensely awake.

She is smaller than me, has a liquid way of merging with me, tangling our legs, threading our fingers, she folds into me, talking near my ear, lingual breathing, eventually nudging us into a light carnal space.

"Ray, where is he?"

"Your dad?"

"Where is he right now?"

"Kiss me."

"Will you tell me after?"

"I'll tell you now."

An open window, its screen measures into the room a cool summer wind. Dusk. After dusk. A bedside lamp, its red light bulb a present from Amante many moons ago.

We are nude. There is trust. We desire each other in many different ways.

Rebecca, I'm going to meld with you now. We are going to mold, to share vibrations, beyond sex, we are going to trip forth into a kind of second virginity. Where nothing is taken away. Where there is addition. Where there is nativity, what loving bodies arch toward but never seem to reach, riding sweat & energy & orgasm, riding the tugboats that are bodies when veritable starships are needed.

I pull you closer to me without entering you, without particularly caressing your fine breasts, closer, riding tightly the electric red tinge down the slope of your pinkcheeks, beginning to break up, our legs twisting together treetrunk tight & solid, our torsos pressing ever closer and beginning to burn, our kiss focal point as you grow my red hair & I see with your beautiful blue eyes, just a pause there, just a moment you become my redhaired muse & I see with your paramount loving eyes, yes there is somewhat lost, I find that even writing this a hand within mine own guides the pen too, a spiritus that is hers alone rocks me slightly as we write there is no return from this but you need to know about your father & this is how I can answer you fullest . . . .

He is learning how to follow her. Rather, he is being taught. His Muse who was his motorcyle has brought him aloft

"No!"

"You won't find her without me!"

"I'll find her. Now give me my fucking bike back!"

Rich Americus, awake now, realizes that he has been riding Merry Muse for days now, that he hasn't been on his motorcycle on a normal road since back along the Jersey Turnpike somewhere, that road above the swampy Meadowlands, he thinks.

Merry is partly reclined before & below him. Her blue eyes crackle light. Her long red hair is impossibly long & red beyond red. Her fecund body is covered by a gauze that highlights her nudity, spotlighting the ready breasts Americus realizes he's been holding, and her hips upon which he sits. Stubbornly, he refuses to move. She smiles, pleased.

But is he inside her? He can't tell. Their genitals must be very close but are cloud-hidden & sense-quiet.

"I remember when I would have killed to get on top of you," he smiles grimly, friendliness disintegrating as it hits the air.

"Oh you know how flighty we girls are. We like you best when you're not trying so hard. When you chase us, it's just too easy."

"Between Gretta & now you, I seem to be fucking my way to find Franny."

"Help contains a price. You owe both of us."

He says nothing. This is useless to fight. He's going to find Franny. It doesn't matter how. He deserves worse than this for letting her leave.

"That's true."

"Will you really help me?"

"Yes, Rich. I'm going to show you how to find her."

"And how to bring her home?"

Merry is silent before him. He's never seen her sad. She can only give him so much this time. He realizes that she's never said no to him before—not really, not finally—, & can't bring herself to do it now.

He leans forward & embraces her, very softly. He feels her expand, grow warmer, become better because of this gesture.

"Show me," he says quietly . . . .

Rich Americus is sitting on a sidewalk, back against a wall, playing his guitar & singing. Takes a moment for him to figure out what song.

"Don't need a weather man
to know which way
the wind blows"

Warm day. Overcast. The street is a fairly wide, straight one, crowded. Many young people. Mostly teenagers, maybe a few a bit older. Hippies, some of them, but many neatly crewcut, primly arranged.

Go slowly, Americus. This is variation on the usual fuckedup Soulard shit. How hard is he to figure out anymore?

Americus is dressed in tie-dye & denim, a scarlet bandana around his head to hold back his long uncombed hair. He slips out of the song & just strums. Longhaired girls pass him & smile, each a bright would-be sister of Franny.

Then one sits down next to him. Harried. Not really looking at him. Red hair. Blue eyes. Body almost rambunctiously potent.

"Don't stop playing."

"What's the trick here, Merry? This isn't helping. Franny wasn't born until 1975."

"Who? My name's Suzann. could you keep playing, please? It's why I came over here. To listen to your music & calm down a little."

Suzann touches his wrist & he now knows she's not Merry Muse. Her touch is a stranger's, sad, running.

Fine. Americus plays on, veering near some of Noisy Children's songs, some not due to be written for nearly 30 years.

"You're good. Why are you playing on the street? You could be in a band."

"I am, sort of."

"You could play the Fillmore. I'd come to listen. What's your band called?"

"Why are you afraid? Is someone chasing you?"

She backs away, spooked. "Are you a friend of his?"

"I'm new to town. I just saw something in your face."

She moves closer to him, says nothing. Looks up & down the street. The trinket shops. The psychedelic stores. Places to get free food & clothes. Places to recover from bad drug trips.

"It used to be better," she says, holding his arm gently, not erotic but needful, beauty plaintive. Beauty, plainly.

"When I first took Davey here two years ago, the Haight was perfect. Nobody wanted it to end like this."

"Davey?"

"The one who's chasing me." Smile. Saddening. "It's me who's gone. I messed up. I love him."

"Why then?"

"Why? Have you ever loved someone so much you had to go away?"

"Yes."

"Stupid, right? No answers."

"Just loss. And regret."

"That's right."

"I'm sorry."

Suddenly she's bright, pouring brightness, woman-volcano, testing me, seeing if I'll flinch, if I can really be trusted. I am burning up, but don't move.

"Tell him it doesn't really matter. Tell him I was wrong but it doesn't matter. He was right. Something never stopped."

To be continued in *Cenacle* / 48 / April 2003

RIC AMANTE

Hamtramck Tetrad

i.

On Joseph Campeau, the main street in Hamtramck—or better yet Joseph Campbell, urban mythology a daily discipline—exist a glut of "99 cents" stores. Everyone loves a bargain, people here live close to the edge financially and temperamentally, and a bargain confers upon the purchaser an unmerited savvy and satisfaction, massages a sore muscle in the convoluted, strained, mercantile lobes of the brain. Why unquestioningly pay a buck-three-eighty for a tin of King Oscar sardines when the same tiny fishes netted off Moroccan shores will lie on your rye for less than a dollar? Garish extraterrestrial figurines, irregular tube sox, suspect security envelopes, recondite wall art, bricks of diaphanous toilet paper—the chimerical, indispensable, palpable sallies that insist that although naked we're born and consumerless we'll die, things physical now hold sway. And the chubby, dimpled Yemeni boy—who charmingly and smoothly bags up your dubious AA batteries and faux-honeydew shampoo—will his participation in this circus of thrift and commerce yield cynic, maverick, saint?

ii.

Marianne eats shards of watermelon on a black wrought-iron bench in her postage-stamp backyard (small blue spruce in the center) as the chimes of St. Florian toll vespers. Earlier she wore a floral skirt and unlaced, green-rubber boots as she scraped away the multiple layers of sodden paint from the metal walls of the rooming-house shower, then meticulously rolled out a gleaming, snow-white coat. Marianne is 59 and talks incessantly, her German-Polish bearing evident in both hygienic deed and word—yesterday's promise to "refresh" the shower stall already made good, the watermelon a cold, adequate reward.

iii.

Seventy wooden pallets lined up against the cocoa-colored, concrete-block wall of Caniff Electric. Some sturdy, unbattered, foursquare, the wood tan and clean. Others with splayed and cracked slats, entire boards missing, wood the color of mopwater. All at ease, though, speechless and content in their inertia (and wasn't that the name of the shirtless boy who asked you for a dollar earlier in the day?), grateful to be set free from the weight of spool or ballast. And tomorrow this slanted congregation will be pulled at by rough human hands, dropped flat on the cold warehouse floor, the blades of a forklift directed through their innards, the molecules of shadow, rest, and detachment knocked silly by labor and demand.

iv.

What's the word for a protracted, aimless peregrination through block after block of city streets, the eyes unfettered though perhaps mated to a tear upon seeing the frail and anonymous beauty of the shadow of a chicory stalk? What's the message and mission of this physical world, of which we are root, husk, pollen? Why do misfits, seekers, and fools feel the urge to walk and walk and walk further still until they drop into the empty but rich plenitude of non-existence? There are no answers to these questions, and the church spires, sparrows, and mongrels continue to chip away at the open blue sky.

RAYMOND SOULARD, JR.

Secret Joy Amongst These Times: The History of Scriptor Press, 1995 to the Present

"Think for yourself
& question authority"
—Dr. Timothy Leary

Chapter Three
continued from
The Cenacle / 46 / June 2001

In *Cenacle* 9-10's "From Soulard's Notebooks" there is a passage dated December 15, 1995: "I don't want to give up on *The Cenacle*: I just need time to catch it up and perhaps retreat from it a bit." During 1996, I struggled to expand *The Cenacle*'s identity. It wasn't worth doing if it wasn't evolving constantly & in exciting directions.

Yet the seeds of the future were, as they always are, already planted. As several consistent contributors & long-time friends passed from my life, an important new one entered, the Georgia artist & writer Barbara Brannon. I decided not to go for a Phd but to try my luck in an Master's of Fine Arts in creative writing program. I applied to Stanford University, University of Iowa, Boston University, Emerson College, Columbia College Chicago, UMass Amherst, & American University. In mid-August I moved from a shared house in Cambridge to my own apartment north of Boston in Malden.

*Cenacle*s # 11 April 1996, #12 May 1996, & #13 June 1996 are of a piece in constituting a transitional phase in the periodical's history. The magazine was developing a more polished look with saddle-stitch binding instead of velo & many pieces were now created using Microsoft Word instead of a typewriter. The accompanying cassettes to these *Cenacle*s no longer contained Mark Bergeron's music mixes on one side; their contents were solely highlights from recent Jellicle Guild meetings. *Cenacle* #14-15 Summer 1996 featured Mark Shorette's poetry collection *Two Vahids*, the second single-author issue of *The Cenacle*. After *Cenacle* 14-15 all manner of frustrating delays would hamper the next issue's completion.

Barbara Brannon's contributions to the 1996 *Cenacle*s were poetry &, most importantly, artwork. Two of 1996's 5 covers contained her artwork & *Cenacle*s 12 & 13

featured her "Artist's Sketchbook." Her early contributions were not by & large new work but older pieces she still liked. Still, I love her work & our working relationship would prove crucial for *The Cenacle*'s development in 1997 & thereafter.

Jim Burke III's letters appear in *Cenacle*s 11-13. In them are long critiques of technology's increasingly invasive role in society:

> *Technology doesn't exist by itself, but we can and have in the past. Man was evolving over millions of years and surviving natural catastrophes from an ice age to an asteroid hit*[;]

his desire to commune more deeply with nature:

> *Ever since I can remember, nature has been the contact that has kept me in touch with myself. The walk in the reservoir was a philosophical happening. Each twig and branch and limb of each tree at each reservoir is coated with a layer of snow — like the whole forest is taking a bath to wash away the technological sins of mankind*[;]

& his anecdotal delight in life's absurdities:

> *It's now the afternoon and PSYCHODERELICT is on the "telly." It's a stunning album. I also have a pint of CC in hand— actually it's down to half-a-pint . . . James T. Reality went to the Butterfly and fell down twice abruptly upon leaving the establishment. Lan offered to help but I scared him away when I said I might fall on him. Lan the bartender serves the dryest Beefeater martinis in the world. Ah!*

Burke's letters are assuring pieces to those out in the world who similarly feel snared just short of their true freedom by Corporate America's powerful machinations.

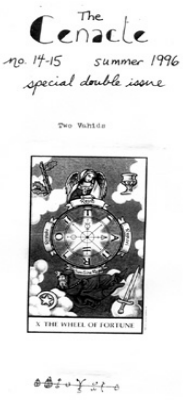
Ric Amante's poetry appeared regularly in the '96 *Cenacle*s & were part of a greater plan I was developing at the time. The idea was to select 50 or so of his poems to be published in the Summer 1996 *Cenacle* & then publish these selfsame poems in chapbook form. In February 1996 we selected about 55 from over 200 during an all-night session whose sequel occurred later that same month when we typed them up during another all-night session.

As it turned out, Ric chose to publish his poems in a book financed by himself. For my help, I received a mention in the book's dedication. Instead of publishing the book I wrote & published a review of *53 Poems* in *Cenacle* #13 June 1996:

> *These poems have been married and also homeless; they've hopped trains and carressed soft-skinned prostitutes; they've flung into winter oceans on a $10 bet and watched empty skies as Father Amante died— and Mother Amante lived on. . .These poems have read Rumi and Rilke and Hart Crane, grooved to Barry White songs, eaten good pasta and drunk Frances and Italys and Portugals of wine, as well as plastic bottles of whiskey and Ballantine. . .*

In 1997 I finally published an issue of *The Cenacle* wholly devoted to Ric's work & in 1999 Scriptor Press published his second book of poetry *Ferry Tales & Other Poems*.

It took all fall & into December to complete *Cenacle* 14-15 Summer 1996 with Mark Shorette's *Two Vahids* poetry sequence. My introduction reads in part:



What distinguishes this collection is the ungarmented soul's obsessive gestures of renunciation, gropes toward transfiguration, and wonderment over the "faint lines on the surface/ and the traces of light—" in " a time imperceptible."

Two Vahids is divided into two sections: "Zaman," or time, & "Azal," or eternity. Esoterically decorated with Tarot card symbols & alchemical cryptograms, the poems follow a metaphysical path through the poet's heart & soul & arrive at home, just as the snippets of Route 20 pictured arrive in Boston from a transcontinental trek. "There are no accidents," Shorette says, & I'm inclined to heed his contention.

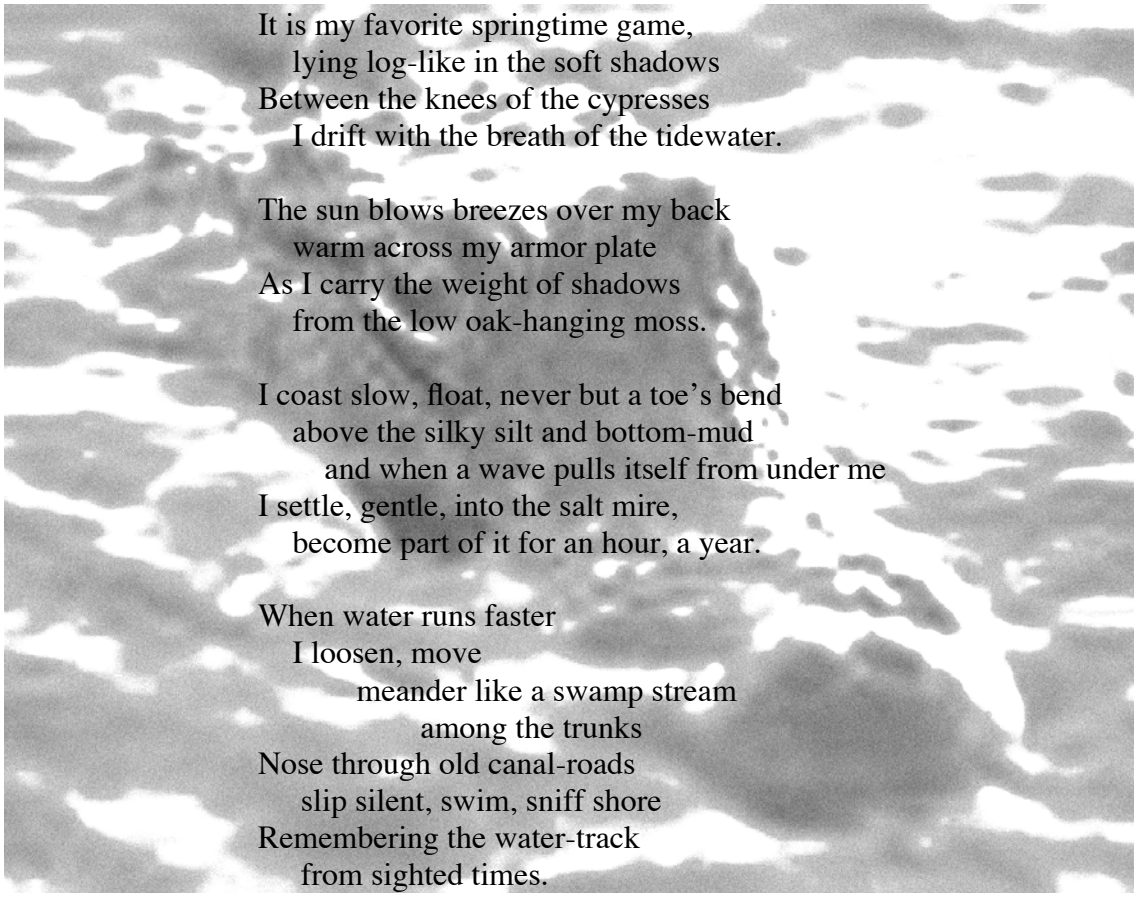
1996 was a crucial year for me to survive personally, & for me to choose to carry on *The Cenacle* despite circumstances. But I carried on & in 1997 the roses began to bloom.

To be continued in *Cenacle* / 48 / April 2003

BARBARA BRANNON

Blind Gator

THE WARM DAYS are coming round again
to the island, to the sound—
I feel it under my smooth albino belly
as I doze half-in, half-out of the marsh ooze.



It is my favorite springtime game,
lying log-like in the soft shadows
Between the knees of the cypresses
I drift with the breath of the tidewater.

The sun blows breezes over my back
warm across my armor plate
As I carry the weight of shadows
from the low oak-hanging moss.

I coast slow, float, never but a toe's bend
above the silky silt and bottom-mud
and when a wave pulls itself from under me
I settle, gentle, into the salt mire,
become part of it for an hour, a year.

When water runs faster
I loosen, move
meander like a swamp stream
among the trunks
Nose through old canal-roads
slip silent, swim, sniff shore
Remembering the water-track
from sighted times.

Smell and sound close, swell around me.
I know scents of oleander and of sand,
Sense scuttle of little fiddler crabs
splash of sunfish, dive of dolphin
whisper of sawgrass, sea oats, sailboats
nesting terns, gulls, pipers
I feel lulls in seasons, when they turn chill a while
then hot again when new-hatched mayflies,
tadpoles, caterpillars, minnows grow

Snakes awake in logs, lay eggs
bogs sprout fresh flowers
ditches blossom out with pitcher plants
and sticky flytraps swallow ants.

* * * * *

THIS SUDDEN SCENT is of sweet water—
Sun and wind wave it to the marsh-margin
where I lie lazy, then raise my snout to graze it.
From my back an egret starts, departs
I turn my whole head toward the water-fragrance
that sounds, sprinkling, tinkling as a buoy bell
and smells like the promise of rain
I hunger first then thirst
and, tired of brine, climb
up to the dry world.

I cross dunes, drag on legs gone heavy
the hike not much to my liking
old and slow as I know myself to be.

But I find my winding way in time
through sand-spurs, thorns, burrs
horned-toads' holes, shell scraps, driftwood
turtles' tracks, deadfall, scrub pine
to the oasis.
The wind had not been wrong:
Its silent song had sent me message
of this inland sea so unlike lakes I know
For here flow cool springs into a pool
smooth free from current, hurry
No rushes crowd its clean rim
ringed by rock and flat pebble path
surrounded by flowers, bushes
towering trees, honeybees combing
the twining sweet wisteria vines.

I slide into water clear as water cannot be
So light I trace no friction of silt on skin
So thin I strike echo from bottom
And it is deep, fit for floating sleep
I immerse myself in it, absorb it, become it
drift again,
glide,
fly.

* * * * *

DREAM-TERROR: I wake to tangled purple vines
    grown up strangling around my neck.
I am drug down, pulled out, bound, muzzled
Shorn of my strength I struggle
    puzzled, mute-jawed, fear-clawed.

Hauled like a beached keel from the pool
Lashed limb and tail, at last made motionless
    I am hefted hard and fast into a webbed cell.

Where they take me is no swamp I have been in
    because even after so long I remember.
I recall all scents, sounds, movements—
    hum of wind, snapped twig, drum of rain
    habits, instincts, ways of raccoons, rabbits
    stinks of skunks, fungus, fern, fire, and lightning
    strike of copperhead, stripe of coral
    feral boar, fleet deer, hare, heron,
    quicksand, trap, and snare.

What they are saying is not *Let him go*.
No, what they find is *blind*, *too old*
    can't fend for himself in the wild.
Child, I know old;
    your grandfather's father told tales of me
    years before you, young one, ever grew
    tall enough to lift the gun I hear cock.

When they take the shot they are quick
Mark dead aim, humane, release
    the trigger swiftly,
    hit.
They are right:
I had forgotten how sight impairs.
I stare, see light as darkness pales
    and scales fall like stars
        from my eyes.

—for Rachel and John Jakes

RAYMOND SOULARD, JR.

6 x 36 Nocturnes

[fifth series]

i. for Leni, 4:30 a.m.

The night gives no hint toward
coming daylight, all sleeps, or
cowers, or prowls. I ready in my
small room to sleep, to dream
of you in your many guises. You
are smiling figure met on a
descending yellow bus, my companion
down flight after flight, my smile
returned for the lilies I give you.
A thousand miles away, really,
& I hope long since asleep. Blonde &
pretty & with me always inside
invisible poems, nearing daylight, brushing my heart.

***

ii. Fragment

Eyes shutting near dawn, carrying
nets of extinguishing night into
dream, nocturnal figures briefly
tapped, a claw of words, shards
of blue—

Nights among outlaws & jackals,
the moon revealed a freak if
one runs the whole way with her,
& she too carried along the stream
of trembling wreckage into dream—

Dream-shore nearly reached as
daylight's ordered craft begins
its humming & clicking. Dream an
island, a beast, now both & a
mansion too, a pretty girl, loss,
colorless moon—

***

iii. Fragment

The air is emptying from the
chamber, & night has fled
& fled.

No answers in book or bed.
All is loneliness, the crushing grip,
two mocking hands dull this heart's living bell.

***

iv. For someone. Anyone.

Embrace it all, or watch it thud,
or flutter. The nightlong mist,
wet music for arrival, continuous
arrival, dawn's memory of arrival,

tell me true, colorless moon, love me too?

Let it go, let the living bell within
its cage squeak & groan & roar,
let my breath tumble to daylight
& my blood sizzle with love,

dance, drink, thrash, scratch the
colorless moon from desire's paper sky.

***

v.

Night crumbles into shadows, stumbles,
flees, not even a decent sun today,
more a colorless indifferent light, power
with neither danger nor laughter—

Here watch a wild colt shake wild of damp,
there watch freighters deliver today's news,
today's human feed, today decaying already
in this peaceless dawn—

Who are we? Few among us outlaws or
seekers, trippin' scriptures—
Mostly slaves to loins & guts, herded by fear,
quieted by law—
Who are we? Watching each other, tangled
blindly inside colorless indifferent light—

Night will come again, seep & crawl
& tickle into pockets & alleys, touch
shadow to shadow, deepen a leaf
here, broaden a laugh there, it will come—

The freighters will roar roads sparked
above & before them, the colt will
lick & whinny & commence to dream
simple wanting dreams—

Dreams will flame here & there in
barn & chamber, mansion & shelter,
dreams will wild, gangs of outlaws &
seekers, building, building note by note,
image by image, mystery by mystery,
land which floats, legs which fly, leaves
which talk, earth which dances, world
which shimmies, hopes for free,
agonies which warn, loneliness which
instructs, freedom a grail, love a
pointing finger, memories for the conflagration,
polity for the amateur's stage, anger
the salt, regret the sugar, life the addiction,
childhood the preacher, kindness the guru,
heed night, its sand beneath you, its
ocean caterwauling, its stars pressing,
your heart clawing toward its truths. Change. Release.

***

vi.

Nameless runs of weeds line nameless streets,
fear the sunny claws atwist a stranger's
fingers, observe the law of locked doors &
clutched secrets, hug close to named
streets, sung flowers, stray only with strong

winds. Pock & pattern the holy emptiness within.
Grow wild with tankard, neon rhythm,
with the elixir that hurries, the meal which
thickens, but elude the dangers found too
deeply within, drums of heat, jungles of smoke,

heart revealed, shared rawly. Strums of
starlight, moon several now & sparking
notes, cluster of pink blooms, wilder dance
sans mask, ten thousand songs thrusting

from she-beasts & he-beasts, fingers flaring

glints of sunshine, night expanded & reduced
to a field, no longer a thing of shinelessness,
now a greater magick, & dreams reinvention
of the world, & the threat of numbers broken,
& the old loneliness docile in the dampness.

The water clear, rapidly healthy, fertile
with making & dissipation, & the beasts
drink & feed in the dawn's dreamest
blush, no claws, only murmuring
breezes, tribal communion, no claws,

no doors, no streets. Each weed tapped
with a flick of holiness. Games of
prayer. Flurries of laughter. A birth
for instruction. A death for remembrance.
A band of kisses prepares the music, the rage

of night summoned, unending at last.

***

vii.

Rage of night, she twists between
fingers' dark power & lips' healing
press, she watches shadows coalesce
in her empty bedchamber, her belly
loins feel the rage everywhere, pulse
hard for connection, another's need, or song.

Love a rupture & gestation, she knows
this too well lying in her naked bed,
hungry dreams with teeth, diminishing
days of deceiving scents, two paws
of need, then claws for –letting or lament.

Dream twined to dream in a chamber,
in a home, in a building, not
the TV, nor electric space, rarely
epiphany in slap of thigh on thigh
but come the weaker hours, the clearer
minutes, come the sink within, spectral chorus rises.

A spiny dream one night, a tangle
of stars' heat & Daddy's cancer, she
moans, she twists, her fingers clutch

an ice cream, slam a wriggling mouth,
a scream, a whimper . . . an echo as
another near her remembers too, a mourning, a shift.

The morning cracks through the night,
grimacing & talking, a low howl,
pressing, lifting, she gives her dream-sweat
body to fresh water, to noise & krinkly
cotton, she moves swiftly til the comfort
& the terror let go, let her fucking go.

Rage of night becomes rant of day,
the wizard who made butterflies from
fire now an ordered street, a hustled meal,
a banged elbow, a missed lunch,
a pressure within, building, & building,
she smiles, she glows, the child within clenches dark fists.

***

viii.

Warm breath flows over me from
a universe strange, growling, curious.
Young, like sunshine. Powerful, open kegs
of moonlight. Starlight fierce, tapping. Joy fires
through me, shredding, hurting. I
want to eat her, & her, & you.

A mourning, a shift. Someone green-eyed
thinks of me, mumbles a riddle, an
incantation, wiggles fingers in the northern
rain. A beaver notices. A damp bush
wavers. The wind talks of empty plains.
Two workmen argue with chess pieces. A growl.

Joy fires through me, flaring everywhere,
an unraveling of gold's innocence &
the clock's many lies. Inns favoring outlaws
post news daily, pipes & hookahs now
lit for morning & midnight prayers. Someone
green-eyed embodies the new dance, the ancient

magick, holier music, strums of
starlight, she moves among tribes
hardly cohered, scattering her words
with the fineness of dust. Becoming a
different range of rhythms, higher
colors. Watch her. Becoming the word love.

A mourning, a shift. Days of greater
 war, nights of spectral ecstasy.
Someone green-eyed fires through me
 as I help build the burning scriptures,
compose the dance to begin the new
 dancing, weep, limp, learn how to love & cry.

I want to eat you, & you, & you. Teach
 you to teach me of love's mutual gifting,
learn how to give, to receive, to know
 your green eyes in both fancy & fright,
serve you at dawn, mugs of fierce starlight,
 plates of glowing fruit. Prayers shaped like kisses.

***

ix. "Meditation on the Sea," Artist Unknown, oil on canvas, 1860s.

A beach strewn with rocks, strewn with men,
strewn with memories. The sea strewn with
none. Lone bench where a man sits thinking,
watching the sea. Watching himself come
to an end. New love. Hurts like always.
Another moment. A red pebble, A blue pebble.

He nods. His suitcoat is blue, his hat canary.
She'd worn a pink gown, a red bonnet.
His heart twists. His memories long for
drowning. Something flares, joy, another diminishes,
a note, diminishing always, a rock, a flame,
no time. No time where the sea is concerned.

Stones scattered on the sand form an
unmade language, untapped tenderness &
brutality. He thinks of her clean skin,
frivolous & carnal her breath while they danced.
A smoke. A steam. A flu. To love one steps back
from the sea. Takes his pebbles, yearns for his note,

back into the world of men & memories, & love's happy abyss.

***

x. for Lisa Marie

What burns in you in beauty,
 blue rose in suspended time,
tinkling necklace impossible

because it lifts sadness, fury
in the tips of quiet fingers. Beauty,
suspended time, pending love, twisting cries.

To love one steps into the sea,
blind wisdom aflame, grey sky new
with direction, hustle, renewed
hustle, into the sea, into the
dream, one loves with every door
open, near lingual tingling,
into the sea, one loves, moments
heated jewels, divinity of anguish & electricity.

A buzz of energy as we converge,
clash of blue rose against its
mate, beauty burning, lingual tingling,
fell endless stream tide forehead
face warm & named, your many
trails of light, small pine, full moon crescendo,

All is water, perfect, unknowable,
your eyes stain my heart &
night, every door open, broad buzzing
beauty, freaks of starfall,
water, perfect, unknowable,
buzz of energy til a corrosive
hunger, a roar through the vacuum
of solitude, your eyes, perfect, unknowable,

pulse, pulses, all that is,
pulses, your eyes, dream's crown
& flute, many trails of light,
fullmoon crescendo, a long dress,
a pink cheek, green eyes flavored
by the sun, a bite, a bonding.

You occupy everything, you occupy
everything. My words become
stained with your love, dream's
crown & randy news, dream's
funky beat & delicious solo,
your burning beauty, sky's dream
of blue roses, suspended time
while new love raises war with a cry.

***

xi. Liberation

To build the burning scriptures offer
your several hands, your jungle
of eyes, the brightest steam of your soul;
to burn the burning scriptures use tongue
& thigh, fuel raised from colored dreams
& things lingering more wisp than earth.

Build the burning scriptures with
your love's crown & flute, with ripe
oranges & empty magnum cartridges,
parade the many nights with
Jesus clowns & Buddha slaves, commit
hourly acts of resurrection, pitchers

of laughter. A new dream. A bigger
dream. No longer a dream at all.
All is Family. All is Beauty. Put down
your hands & begin to believe this.
Higher the scriptures burn, the less
of the lie that is You & I, You & I.

Festival now to compose the dance to
begin the new dancing, festival
in desert wind, among low-hung
panting stars, festival to deliver
You from You & I from I, festival of the
burning scriptures, scorched cities, charred pain.

Once meaning glinted from texts of water,
clouds the storybook, sunshine for
thirst, colors everywhere the candies of
playful eyes, clasping hands. Once,
perhaps, a crooked puppy of a day,
but no more. Love now smells

of rising smoke. A new dance, new fire.
Our best words dry, taut, sober,
revealing. Our way now beyond the
known path, into the crackling, into
the murk. Creatures mark us from
every tree, bush, bless, praise, but do not deter.

***

xii. Holiness Rant, part one

Holy something in each moment,
 holy step to step, word to word,
the blaze on the turnpike, thrummings
 in the woods, every gesture,
every tumble, holy something, whatever
 what, a tap, a bomb, a kiss, lights,

shadows on a walkway, holy confusion,
 holy bliss, holy silence, the bastards
in numbers, their demons, their fears,
 holiness in consumed cities, swishing
meadows, in the brush's gesture of her
 smile, greed, goodness, new blood, old bones,

holiness in fingers & claws & fins,
 in speeding light & careening heat,
in simple entropy, simple resurrection,
 dreams with power beyond armies,
beyond time & wee-leaf conceptions of
 reality, of love, holiness into the crackling,

into the murk, this universe a river
 of light, infinite currents of music,
& what flows from nowhere to beyond,
 when a hand might beg for just another
hand, a simple dance, a quartet of
 comforts, something funny, something safe,

holiness unbounded & untaught, unheld,
 unhad, unknown, the shine of things
hints, what coalesces, what disperses,
 the hints from birds & weeds, from
creatures that pause & sniff to know,
 the predator, the pursued, holiness

on the starship, within the flesh, what
 polity fears, & thus controls, coronas
of want, secret burning cities of bliss,
 the veil crushed, her night revealed,
holiness in the taste & in the suck,
 renting the fist, slicing it raw,

because holy something in each moment,
 every inch, soil & concrete, roots & missiles,
every inch, every inch, Godd is green,
 grows from the ground, every inch,
holiness sprouts or will again soon,

growing the native impulse, only scripture,

serve that which grows & thus prosper,
serve that which creates, that
which inspires, the night, its dreams,
what persists, unnamed, serve the
dance & its dancers, the music &
its creators, alight with love,

aloft with restlessness, holiness, holiness,
all holiness along the trail, call it years
or seasons, eggs or twilights, in every step &
every moment, the wisdom found
in stroking an oak tree, remembrancing
a lost face, a mourn, a smile,

some other place to be gotten to, here
to hereon, then to never, & the day
says 'no direction but home,' & the night
chants 'no direction but home,' & dreams &
ducks say it too, listen to the secret, the
key, the living word, the holiness flushed out, & revealed.

***

xiii. Holiness Rant, part two

All alone, all suffering, yes. Holiness a blank
burst in a plain blue sky, an exception,
a bite leaving neither mark nor advice.
Not a roof nor cooked flesh, not a damp thigh
nor laughing touch, water, gunpowder's warning
to the bandit's trespass, not a king nor a judge.

All alone, all suffering, yes, & holiness stamps
the earth & nods, scorches the flags,
points to the mountain, the woods, the sea.
Holiness etches the cactus as model, flocks
of geese as example, the paintbrush hung
dripping with red oil, the dance in hungry flight.

All alone, all suffering, yes. Fuck yes &
shit yes & bullet yes & hate yes.
Camps of smoke. Rooms of moaning darkness.
A world fat with miracle & woe. Violation
of the tender, resurrection of the crushed.
Holiness nods, winks, licks your sugar, limps on.

All alone, all suffering, yes, & holiness

declaims ‘no direction but home,’ & holiness
barks ‘no direction but home,’ & hands
you basket of feathers & shells, oak leaves
& photos of insisting beauty, lyre & flicker
of old dream, gourd of water, starshine, snowflake.

All alone, all suffering, yes, til some
things you surrender & others you forgive.
Holiness with the flattened ears &
laidback fur, further along the path.
Offering you the least beginnings of a
joined scripture. A test, a dusk, a study, a star.

All alone, all suffering, yes. Holiness
in a flash of blonde hair, a hum of
green eyes. Obscure endings in the jungle,
ideas twisted open & freed in occasional
desert rages. Surrender some things,
forgive others. Give a fuck. Give two.

***

xiv. Brotherhood of the Fire

Brotherhood of fire, of the leaf, of the molecule,
bee-sting of mortality, sting of identity, sting
of empty hands, dreamless days, press a freak
for news of another & three more appear
with silence, smiles, this way to the communal
burn, the embedded soup, accelerated laughter.

Sparks of dragonfly, glints of a forgotten beast,
moss for the star-skinned bare foot, the day
a bee-sting of rules fled now, watch. Hurry,
now, through the dead trunks, smoldering
pine needles. Molecule & leaf summon
passing vehicles through ether & spirit. Hurry.

Surrender some things, forgive others.
Fern & moss, pattern & smoke of a
language needed, nearing. Past midnight
a beat. A beat. Now many. Ideas twisted
open & freed in nightly forest ecstasies
of squeak & crunch. Spark. Glint. Sting.

Brotherhood of fire, of the leaf, of the molecule,
hands broach hands, breach of an old, hard
wall, bring the water next morning,
bring the pipe, bring the words. Wounds.

Laughter. Stream of souls passing through.
Give a fuck. Give two.

A language needed, nearing. A night scratched,
stressed, brotherhood welded by the flame,
the leaf, the molecule, a beat, a beat,
now many. Sting of the next dream, new day.
Surrender some things, forgive others. Ash
covers the world, a blanket, sleep, oblivion.

***

xv. Elevation

What covers the world, a wish to learn,
shapes & patterns, bones, buzz, flesh,
a word. Observing, aloft, starship buckled
by stones of air, a fever to know, what
manner of thrummings make the song? What
feast of music sings the world?

Cities & villages, speckles of reflection, busily
asleep by day, half-lit, freakish at night.
A wish to learn quarrels a wish for safety.
Observing, aloft, knowing any man's midnight
equation can be bludgeoned by another who
drinks the molecule, smokes the leaf.

Trees cover the earth, blood-heavy, green
the power of living earth. Wishing to learn,
to reckon leaf & bud, to understand the
mountains below: you do not understand
the mountains below. Observing, aloft,
now obscured by smoke of freedom. Floating dew.

Snow, hurricanoe, sleep. Monument,
bonfire, dust. Festival, swamp, blueberry.
Decay, dawn. Entropy. Resurrection. A wish
to learn how to learn, to reckon rightly
what one knows, reckon the shadows
within, reckon the shadows below.

Surrender some things, forgive others.
Observing, aloft, a wish to learn,
what manner of thrummings make the song?
What feast of music sings the world?
What remains up here as this starship
descends? Which ties to preserve?

Which ties to unclasp? A wish to learn
 quarrels bliss's unnamed splatter. You do
not need to understand bliss. Just surrender
 some things, forgive others. The starship
passes your wish to learn into the approaching
 blind eye of water. Thrummings. A kiss. Lights.

Holiness. Descending. Step in.

***

xvi. Burning Man 2001, Black Rock City, NV (first of five)

Beyond men, the mountains. Beyond mountains,
 dream, music, wings without body, nothing
named or divided. The fierce, faded blue sky
 by day, spangle & spectacle of stars by
night. The high beyond fingers & words.
 The high beyond mountains & men.

High beyond meaning. Where the power raised
 arrives, breathes slower, roars to rest. Delight
in the stain of the last pink bloom. Pulsing
 lawn, where the castles of history will
lastly tumble. High beyond path, beyond gleam,
 beyond way. Sum of two pine & a shell revealed.

***

xvii. Burning Man 2001,
Black Rock City, NV
(second of five)
[for Claudia]

Observe what emerges, what disappears:
 The road behind us, railed & roofed—
 Our hearts encased in music, now bludgeoned, now free—
 The fear in holding hands, in letting go, in grasping
        the beams—

One hungry ecstatic matter to the next:
 I fell from the bridge. You followed.
 I danced & made music. You quietly called it Art.
 My river tightened & shattered. You stayed near. You sang.

No direction but home:
 By memory, by turning leaf, by tingling wound.
 By the thousand notes of flail, the thousand freaks of hope.
 A gardened soul. Call it omniana. Call it chance. Call

it intent. Call it love.

Trust the universe not because it is safe
but because it is home:
Home. High, low. Death, life. Love, silence.
Home. Breed. Suffer. Name a star. Bleed.
Home. In the swamps of the cities. Brood. Decay.

Holiness unbound & untaught, holiness
hangs in juicy gourds from trees.
Holiness pounds & presses. I love you.
Holiness flakes & flames. We can never be too high.
Holiness is mine. You are mine. We belong to everything.

What emerges. What disappears.
Hand stroking hand, fiercest thing in the world.
Heart unveiling to heart. Laughter. Scorching.
Be wild. Be the world. Release. Jump!

***

xviii. Burning Man 2001,
Black Rock City, NV
(third of five)
[for Ernie]

How to live, how to live, how to live,
& why. You ache & need soup.
How to build a home, build a heart,
build a man. Build faster than tears.
How to say yes to everything, every last
thing. Yes. Yes. Yes to you?

Begin in the mystery of what you
are. Your heavy emptiness. The forests,
the mountains, the does & vermin within
this heaviness. Begin with your hidden
dreams, your unconfessed sun & stars.
You are as primal as fire. Language of the peak.

A different path. A different way.
Dreams many & priceless as dandelions.
Howl. Howl! You wish to be clean as
the earth, steep as the ocean, like
the flames a baby watches dance in
the palms of her hands. Howl!

Love. Only love. There is only love.
Force of the cosmos, thrust of

the stars, energy eating energy eating
energy, love. Only love. There is only
love. You know this in your dreamless
fright. Say it. Love. There is only love.

The rest falls away. Still you ask:
How to live? How to live? How to live
& why? Build a house? Build a heart?
Build a man. Perhaps tomorrow. Perhaps
never. Perhaps you are the catalyst you
seek. Perhaps tonight you will sleep. Dandelion dreams.

***

xix. Burning Man 2001,
Black Rock City, NV
(fourth of five)
[for Aspen]

I hang from this sky of darkness,
feeding inside my globe of light,
waiting for your approach, your hand,
your claw, your beauteous thrust, thunder—

Perhaps this is your fate, your mission,
the meaning you need, approaching me,
what you do for your godd & your grub,
approach me, fueled by tumbles & chance—

And I approach you too though I do not
move. I approach you through butterflies of
sunshine though I do not move. I approach
you while waiting for how you will dream me next.

How you will dream me next beyond thought.
Beyond fame & delight. You dream my better
juice is finally high. Bang! A new name.
Bang! A clear song. Bang! Drums & luck.

We make Art because we have forgotten
how to tell the truth. We make Art
because the night's starry cool tells
us little we wish to know. We make Art cuz there's little else left.

Now you are finally here, your accelerating
light, drown me, flood me, make me anew.
Teach me again to make Art, to tell the truth.
Teach me again the one true note, the collision, the way, the end.

***

xx. Burning Man 2001,
Black Rock City, NV
(fifth of five)
[for Devin]

Here a staying music. Here a shimmering
permanence. But I do not stay.
I leap along, water, consciousness,
& dreams. I hurry sometimes like I
have somewhere to go. Something to do
with blood, tribe, necessity. Danger.

There is neither necessity nor danger.
I know because I hear laughter.
Some of it mine, some the bumps &
whorls of bush & soil as I land,
nearly stay, careen again, open-fingered, close-fisted,
thrust forward. Propel my godd. Electricity. Fear. Love me.

Staying music. Shimmering permanence.
My heart is spacious within, I feel
its news in waves of color, its phalanx
of spirits, its governance I receive as
song in the silence of my flights.
What am I? Am I bigger than the world?

There is no world. My flights in
their zenith show me this. From a
thousand clouds high I am nearly ready
to release possession of what I can no
longer see, what never is or was. Nearly
ready, I feel the descent again. Love me always.

Staying music, shimmering permanence, will
I need to tumble bloody into my coming
arrival? Will my arrival taste of soil
or sky? There is no world. Touch me.
There is no world. My breast & bones cry out.
There is no world. Yet I am wet & raw

with something. Wet & raw & nothing
can love me like my own touch,
my own breath, my own dreams.
Staying music. Shimmering permanence.
There is no world. I will learn to wield
it better by century, by flame. Bursting, arriving, I will learn.

***

xxi. Rainy World (for Lisa Marie)

Pulsing from the stain of the last pink bloom,
a step forward, a dozen, a hundred,
& will there ever be another? She looks
at me, blazing spikes of youth, looks at me,
in one hand a cup of fur, in the other
a lightless quest. She wiggles. Expects.

Are you the stain? Am I the bloom? Who pulses
whom? Hold your eyes holding mine, teach
me again, the one true note, the collision,
the way, the end. Butterflies from fire
alight your dress, teach me. Praise me.
The sky has washed the world again tonight.

I am the stain. You are the bloom. We
cruise toward wetter, pinker places.
We scream & collide. We laugh. Sometimes
you are my muse, sometimes you
are my girl. Teach me the true note,
the broken harness, the moaning sea,

the end achieved in each pink bloom,
seed, gestation, maturity, stain.
Ecstasy & grief, you bite my thigh.
You push me down. You have me,
then something more. My breast & bones
cry out. All which ever was, you are.

We are the bloom, become the stain,
a carnal thrust, then something more.
Bones burned for healing. Breast crushed
to punish time. The smack & soot
of hands on skin, words grunted, the
whispers of the nearly lost, barely won.

A step forward, a dozen, a hundred
more. She sleeps again, sans wiggle,
sans fear. I sang her to dream with
my feather on her chest. Black ink,
rough blood. A butterfly traced on each breast,
alive, aflame, breathing. A stain. Abloom.

***

xxii. Hunger (for Lisa Marie)

I think past your throbbing mouth
into the skulls & clouds of your
many past nights, the pain &
its echoes & what remains still
within your clear young skin, touch
along blindly, a manless forest, a bulleted
dream, within you, within's within,
that I may know the crinkles in your
breath, your tremors, your toes.

Kisses of light, kisses of water, kisses of sound,
a glee in the way you stroke your damp
morning hair, a tremble as the hunger
in your voice thickens bluntly, a mystery
that I know you at all, a nod that I
barely do, a laugh as you squirm in
grass, bubblegum, flaring dirty ditties,
learning when to wear eyeglasses, & when
to take them off, snarl with heavy love.

You've known none like me. I'll be your first
& last. We know each other already in
dreams & silence. We met first in the
bulleted dream, fucked without names
midst angels & coyotes, each bite, each
scratch, a presentiment of some canyon
to come, some cactus tavern barstool,
some moony yowling night when
we shatter & seal, fall, pierce & release.

A coming stumble into the night, with
open hands, a wider sky, deeper magick,
festival of movement, all creation
in motion, we will attend & study,
but not rule, wiggle within the
music, within's within, hunger,
hunger's hunger, butterflies from
starlight, stay near me, girl, goddess,
stay, sing. Howl. Hurt. Heal.

Tonight I twist, & sit alone & think
of you. The wild blooms-to-be in your
hair. The laughing bloodfucks to come.
In the canyon & naked we'll scream
of the past, count its echoes, bury
what remains. Bury the bulleted dream,
fill our water bottles. Sleep soundless &

twined, til morning accelerates to hunger,
& evening evolves to a medicine called love.

***

xxiii. Clouds & Trees (for Lisa Marie)

Teach me to look elsewhere, beloved,
through clouds, between trees, into &
through & beyond, the beauty of water-sliced
rock, the balance of weightless things
that buzz & float. Teach me to see
feelingfully into the world's skein of hope & decay.

What feast of music sings the world?
Its hungers tremble up leaf to leaf toward
the puffy blue sky, wet watching sky, &
I wish to watch you watching, see you
trace an oak leaf's tips, what music douses
your skin? What roots, what tendrils, drip from your reply?

Teach me. Teach me. Conjure between us
a kiss, an art, a way. Conjure a meaning
raw with beauty, a lash against every
pressing hide of control. Dream of the sunshine
you will suck from me in later nights.
The howl of angels & coyotes you've already known.

A lightless quest, beloved, a tide ever
higher, a tree of rivers the blazing
blood of the world, the pink clouds
of want, the golden ones of power,
the white ones of mystery, the black
ones of freedom. Teach me, beloved.

Between us ever a brave book of
blank pages, between us a thrust
& beat you are teaching me. Between
us corrosion, invention, hustle from
the past, grunts five thousand miles
loud. Lick & listen.

To look elsewhere, through crown &
cosmos, look newly, with branches
for eyes, leaves for words, roots for
memory. What floats, what shines, what
passes, what falls. A kiss, an art, a way.
Teach me til I learn how to learn. Feel the world & know.

***

xxiv. Fervor & Fuel (for Lisa Marie)

Trailing memories into the moony
desert, emptying into the swept
wooden shrine, tall candles, a slow
pilgrim, his dream wagging with feathers
at the heart of the world, I ask him
where She is, he says "you know nothing
but love. pray. don't run." I walk on,
now, still memories, always, he calls "She
is teaching you to look elsewhere, find her!"
I say "to reinvent the world you must begin
everywhere & nowhere" but he does not hear
me. Nothing left now but fuel & fervor. Nothing left but love.

***

xxv. Bright Pink Lights (for Lisa Marie)

To reinvent the world you must begin
 everywhere & nowhere, pursue into
alleys, into bright furies, pursue
 faith, trust, & passion. Admire a
woman's leg & think: Art. Challenge the gun
 & the bully, think for yourself, question

crown & cosmos, accept lash & praise with
 balance & deflection, think ever of a
loved one beneath her covers, growling
 with want & love, pitch bravely into
doubt's strong, mad face, understand
 the hustle of both sugar & maya:

No direction but home. No direction but home.

To reinvent the world you must begin
 now. Never. Always. Look elsewhere,
count your fingers, begin. Beyond the waters
 without, beyond the smoke within.
Beyond wastes & gardens both burning bright
 with beauty. Somewhere the bright pink lights
absolutely sing with your beloved's dreams.

To reinvent the world you must
 imagine no world at all, total
absence of this life's grease & goo,
 no moan for the newly born nor

tremble for who & what passes on,
 nor wordless breath that anything,

anywhere exists at all. Midst the wars
 for nothing & the raw days of
suffering, a glimmer. A moment of
 green clarity. Not a song, not even
a strum, but still listen to the air

as she passes by. A hum. Confess it:
 a hunger among the irony & the fear.

Somewhere the bright pink lights
 absolutely sing with your beloved's dreams,
dreams not of crown nor cosmos,
 dreams of twist & twining, of kissing
& finally having her own, tongueless pebbles
 in the sky, no longer chasing or falling.

***

xxvi. Wastes & Gardens (for Lisa Marie)

Wastes & gardens, tumble into the silence,
 hunger for a pressing warmth, hungry now,
pink leaves & sour berries, a pipeful distilled
 & puffed at sea's edge, smoke, shadows,
wastes & gardens, fingers hooked among fingers,

"I miss you," she said. "I love you more every

day, in the twistingmost freaks of my dreams,
 the old ones I've told you many times about."

Wastes & gardens, swarming flames across
 the mind, daylight's bastards smile too, smile
pretty, warn, hug, preach. The moon is an
 always new ribbon between us, my love, azure,
indigo, scarlet. Nothing changes today.
 Azure, indigo, scarlet. Harder steam. Climbing.

Wonder & love are faiths, not facts.

Steer your life's course by the page or
 by the flicker.

Wastes & gardens, nothing left but a forge
 & a memory. How hope rolls on through
darkness, through worse. A field of butterflies

& brambles. Naked, hurt, hurrying, keep
choosing, keep turning leaf to leaf, flake to flake,
kiss by kiss. Leap & stumble. Plain & golden.

***

xxvii. Holiness Rant, part three [fugue]

Wage Beauty. Watch her from afar, an arched
torso in a lit vault, a memory, a dream,
call a word to her of what's to come:

Wage Beauty. Strum your silence, listen, is it restless,
does it smolder? Who is holy if not you?
What is holy if not all?

Wage Beauty. Between the bricks, among the lights,
a something. A song. A something. Hurry along
to catch your companions. Or don't. Think:

Wage Beauty. Not in the glimmer of a shoulder,
something else. The stillness & power of a trunk.
The leaves that vibrate. The mysteries which persist.

Wage Beauty. Midst vengeance & jihad, money & mania,
a throb in your wrist. A hum behind your eyes.
A holiness in your veins. What is holy if not all?

Wage Beauty. Wage Music. Wage Yourself.
Wage Hunger & its filling. Wage Family & its teeth.
Wage Love. Strip raw tonight. Wage Something.

***

xxviii. Holiness Rant, part four

New blood hurries old bones along, in leaf
& man, storm & art, every field east
& west liquid with movement, squeak unknowing
of the wrinkle, spasm become suckle,
hurrying leaf, dragging grief, a cane,
a softball, a veil, a tremble, a shriek.

The bitching gnaw. The holiness of need.
New blood. Old bones. A dead brother recalled
in a dream, soft again, deaf, blunt. Beauty
without the bruise of grief. Hurrying together
in a new world, his blood still new, my bones
still older. Hurrying without history's scrape.

We conclude in a park where old men sleep
 & piss. Tepid bones, dead blood. I lose him
again, & always, but for the claw of knotted sand,
 but for the name, but for the magick. What is
holy if not all? Some sleep with needles.
 Some sleep in trash. No blood. No bones.

In leaf & man, storm & art, some frenzy,
 some jitter, perhaps a wall of steel windows,
perhaps a dance, a jug, a garnished thigh,
 perhaps a curtain of gold, a muffled
byway, she rattles my blood, rocks my bones,
 a flourish of curves, riddles & upset,

A greater magick, anguish & electricity,
 a power visible in my dreams, among
my prayers, the city become a carriage,
 become a hearse, become a woman
I'll wed, become a pen, a song, immolation,
 a finger the child I was waved at stars,

new blood, new bones. Always. New blood,
 new bones. Flourishes of war & agony
no preacher may sum & nod. Quiet dissolution
 while the kings clutch maps, while everything
silently burns. Despair the expanding mold
 midst crowds of clutching flags, pairs of crushing thighs.

***

xxix. Homesickness (for Lisa Marie)

A passion for you. A carwreck ending my
  life. Perhaps.

Are you an instrument or are you a hand?
Are you a mind or are you a salute?
Are you discrimination or are you capitulation?
Think for yourself. Question all. Be prepared
  for the next day, & its probing night.

Wage Beauty. Wage Art. Wage Yourself. Wage Yourself
  Wage Yourself. Wage Yourself.

Homesickness, my love. Fields passed in a car,
  perhaps corn, perhaps tobacco.

What are you afraid to smoke?

What are you afraid to say?
What do you fear is to come?
When the world opens, anew, sheds its tickings
  & its kings, what will you see?

Give both hands. Shed a life's worth of books &
  memories, but a few. Hurry. With care.

A passion for you. Beyond babies, beyond
  dreams. A howling in an empty canyon.
This is my mate. She is far. She is mine.

Homesickness, my love. For a barn of toys,
  a father's lap. Hide-and-seek. Faces.

What persists from your dreams, shapes them?
What of you is not tired nor beaten?
Can you mark the last day a thrill occurred?
Can you sniff the air & sense coming of
  the next?

A passion for you. An old car, a soft radio,
  a book on mushrooms. A girl's teasing laugh.

What hopes continue to broaden outward?
What old memories stay, begin to make a life?
What years in your company shall be lengthless
  with joy?
What melody you hum I've always heard,
  always known?

Homesickness, my love. For a world to come, still a
  dream, still a babe.

For a world fanged for survival,
  soft for enduring love.

For a world among trees & buzzing,
  a world awled in muddy rock.

For a world in the shadow of your
  shoulders, slant of your gaze.

For a world, tonight, still growling
  for birth, pressed on by homesickness,
by the hand I wish to be, the instrument I love to wield.

***

xxx.

To believe nothing. To believe everything.
Eventually devolve to a seed, a hook,
a melody. A staying touch. To an afternoon shine
along a stretch of earth. A voice that
keeps talking—please!—keep talking.
A good enough called God.

If lucky, a god that opens wide in flames.

***

xxxi. War (for Lisa Marie)

A howl opens to sunshine, muddy sky
split, fade into the fierce, music
unending, through the night, the killing
kind, the king's pattern for sparks
& blood, for a crimson vengeance, a building
pry into the guts of stars & earth.

Douse the burning scriptures. Where
the sparrows flap & bathe, toss in
the crown & its sparks & its plans.
We belong to the world, it may yet
heal us as a father tows his screaming
child from a broken toy, a rabid pet.

Surrender some things, forgive others.
There is no world. There is only love.
The king's conflagration need not burn
the air. Warriors may stow their flags
& puff thoughtfully together. There is no world.
There is only love. Prove it otherwise.

Reckon the myths of lost gardens &
pending wastes. Reckon the preachers
who speak all of melting worlds but nothing
of glowing moments. Reckon the butterfly
in repose, slice of buzz, now awing through
a pair of blonde girls posing as oaks.

Reckon the breast which once fed you &
the cosmos which feeds all. Reckon
the blind day when you will feed the cosmos
in return. Yet today you are still hungrier
than the world. Today your hands still
sway with music. You still love with strange glee.

The howl is yours, today, to release
with wrath or ecstasy. Your choice
to join the world's making or submit to
the king's frigid rage. To fill the cup
deeper, pass it wider around. To summon
aches & griefs toward new plantings & pulsing starflight.

***

xxxii. Holiness Rant, part five

Tonight there seems little left,
hardly worth dividing between
two friends, lovers fading, the gentle
tremble of obscurity, little left
but to wield a pen & remember some
old song, some gone bed, some other day's

stiff flag, holy something in every
moment, o yes, the jitter of belief,
the parade of fierce, the curve
that mattered, the pink more than
a thought or its girl, no, she dreamed
reinvention of the world & I listened,

a rampage, a gleam, a way. I listened.
I still wish to listen, to tangle tails
with the flecks & hungry gold of who
that boy was, as he listened, he watched,
he saw her approach music, heard
her sing from texts of water.

He listened. All alone, all suffering,
yes. I listened. When the bombs
neared, I learned to dance. When she
lit off into life's long flight, I learned
to groove. When came time to kiss &
burn my gurus, I grieved. All is grief.

So one grieves. Now tonight I wonder:
what can be left? I wonder.
I listen. Holy something in every moment.
New blood still hurries my old bones
along. I know not why. We freaks
will never own the world.

Too busy chasing grooves into rabbit
holes, I suppose. Too busy scratching

at bombs of beauty, maybe. Too busy
 bringing the forests & arroyos the news
that there is no news. The heartbeat of
 king & coyote reverberate equally in this trembling night.

***

xxiii. Instructions

Smile.
Wake up.
Happiness.

Smile. Wake up. Happiness.

Smile!
Wake up!
Happiness?

(smile.) (wake up.) (happiness.)

Smilewakeuphappiness!

:)
!
.

***

xxxiv. Further

Language is neither the alpha
        nor omega.

At one end, silence.

At the other, laughter.

In between: laughter.

***

xxxv. Penultimate (for Lisa Marie)

INSTRUCTIONS

Smile. = E Major 7th = blue
Wake up! = A Minor = green
Happiness = C Major 6th = pink

***

xxxvi. Holiness Rant, part six (for Lisa Marie)

"Transformation can only take place immediately;
the revolution is now, not tomorrow."
—Krishnamurti

Smile. This moment is trembling with the
thrum of thine hands, the quick of
thine beat. Release thine anguish &
electricity as the jay releases the air
& the bush releases its fruit. This moment
contains a blush & a war. Many blushes,
but only one war. Smile. This moment a god,
breaking wide in flames; a man, hands
of ash which cover the world; a dream's
crown & flute, pale, knowing music of dawn,
raw take & flee of noon, arching harmonies
of midnight & deeper; a beast, fragrant
hunger to sleep & gestate; a buzz, a wave,
a pulse. A mystery, a medicine, a holiness
which tramps & makes & crushes.
Smile. Let's save the world. It's easy.
Forgive. Surrender. We make the world
with another's clay. A dance. A deepening.

Wake up! Trust the universe not because it is
safe but because it is home, secret burning
cities of bliss, the living bells of child,
cricket, a mind's unleashing molecule, trust.
Spit back the false dream herb of polity
& scripture. Wake up! Beyond path,
beyond gleam, beyond way. Wage Beauty &
call it thine governance. Weep until you
are ready to begin. Culminate in emptiness,
a shell by an oak, a corpse by a stream,
a book of instructions in the language of
ash. A fever where once strode a man,
a glow evanescing where once a woman
laughed & leaned closer. Wake up!
A scent. A leaving. Holiness sucked
in, a sweet living poison. Holiness in
goblets drunk by artisans, preachers, &
kings. Hidden & studied & bred.

Happiness. A maiden in her dreaming bed.
Her love impels my hand. She is my

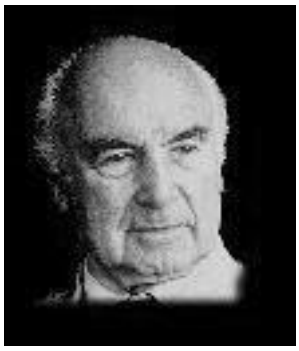
singer & my song. Let's save the world,
with whispers & wood, water & smoke,
doubts, dancing, drink the elixir now.
What is holy if not all? Drink the elixir
now! Happiness. There is no world.
There is only a moment, trembling.
There is only this moment, beating.
Weep & begin. Many blushes, but only
one war. A happiness, an emptiness,
a collision with no sound.
I seek the singer to become her song,
become the pen she wields, become the clay
she presses.
I breathe me out slowly, until I am gone,
until I am berries ripened & flown,
a blush to new eyes, a war without hands.

DR. ALBERT HOFMANN

LSD: Completely Personal

speech delivered to the 1996 Worlds of Consciousness Conference
in Heidelberg, Germany
[translated from the original German (*LSD: Ganz Persönlich*) by J. Ott]

One often asks oneself what roles planning and chance play in the realization of the most important events in our lives. With respect to a given event, this involves the question, just how much was destiny, how much free will? This question has preoccupied me again and again in relation to one of the most significant and consequential events in my life in relation to the discovery of LSD.



In order that this event might have occurred, the "switches" must have been set in quite a specific direction at various points in my life. In deciding on my profession, I had to choose to become a chemist. This decision was not easy for me. I had already taken a Latin matricular exam, and therefore a career in the humanities stood out most prominently in the foreground. Moreover, an artistic career was tempting. In the end, however, it was a problem of theoretical knowledge which induced me to study chemistry, which was a great surprise to all who knew me.

Mystical experiences in childhood, in which Nature was altered in magical ways, had provoked questions concerning the essence of the external, material world, and chemistry was the scientific field which might afford insights into this.

A second, important decision on the fateful path to LSD was my choice of jobs. I chose the pharmaceutical-chemical research laboratories of the firm Sandoz ltd. in Basel. What attracted me to this job was the research program undertaken by the laboratory director, Professor Arthur Stoll, on the advice of the famous Nobel Prize winner Professor Richard Willstutter; namely, the isolation and purification of the active principles of well-known medicinal plants, and their chemical modification. Here chemical research impinged on the life of the plant world, which doubly fascinated me. A further, wholly decisive "switch-setting" took place, after I had already been occupied for some years with cardioactive medicinal plants like Digitalis and Mediterranean squill, when I applied myself to research on ergot I still quite distinctly recall the deep feeling of fortune in expectation of the adventure of discovery promised by this still little researched field of study. This expectation was later amply fulfilled. Important medicaments derived from that research, whose absence from the medicinal treasury today is unimaginable: Methergine, the standard preparation for stanching of post-partum hemorrhage; Dihydergot, a circulatory stabilizing medicament; Hydergine, a geriatric medicine for treatment of infirmities of old age; and the psychopharmaka LSD and psilocybin. It is remarkable how clearly I remember the circumstances under which the idea of synthesizing the substance lysergic acid diethylamide came to me. At the time I did not take my midday meal in the company cafeteria, but instead remained in my laboratory during the midday break, and nourished myself on a slice of bread with honey and butter and a glass of milk, which was delivered fresh every morning from the Sandoz agricultural research farm. I had finished my delicious meal and was pacing

back and forth, ruminating on my work. Suddenly there occurred to me the well-known circulatory stimulant Coramin, and the idea and possibility of synthesizing an analogous compound based on lysergic acid, which is the basic building block of ergot alkaloids. Chemically, Coramin is nicotinic acid diethylamide, and I analogously planned to synthesize lysergic acid diethylamide. The chemical-structural similarity of these two compounds led me to expect analogous pharmacological properties. With lysergic acid diethylamide I hoped to obtain a novel, improved circulatory stimulant. The first synthesis of Lysergsaure-diethylamid [or LSD, whose acronym derives from the initials of the German name—Trans.] is described in my laboratory notebook under the date 16 November 1938.[1] This substance lysergic acid diethylamide, which has become world-famous under the designation LSD, was thus the product of rational planning. Chance first came into play later.

The novel compound came under routine pharmacological investigation in the biological-medicinal laboratory. In the research report, apart from a strong activity on the uterus and the evoking of a certain restlessness in the research animals during the narcosis, no properties were mentioned which might have pointed to a Coramin-like effect on circulation. The novel substance lysergic acid diethylamide appeared to be pharmacologically uninteresting, and underwent no further tests.

Yet five years later, once again during a creative midday break, the idea came to me in a strange way, again to synthesize lysergic acid diethylamide for further pharmacological testing. It was no more than a hunch! I liked the chemical structure of the substance —which led me to take this unusual step, since compounds as a rule were never handled again, when once discarded.

During the new repetition of the synthesis of lysergic acid diethylamide, a repetition, so to speak, grounded on a hunch, chance had the opportunity to come into play. At the conclusion of the synthesis, I was overtaken by a very weird state of consciousness, which today one might call “psychedelic.” Although I was accustomed to scrupulously clean work, a trace of the substance must accidentally have entered my body, probably during the purification via recrystallization. In order to test this supposition, I made the first planned self-experiment with LSD three days later, on 19 April 1943. It was a horror trip. The details have already been described so many times, that they can be foregone here.

Considered from a personal perspective, the psychedelic effect of lysergic acid diethylamide would not have been discovered without the intervention of chance. Like many tens of thousands of substances annually synthesized and tested in pharmaceutical research, then found to be inactive, the compound might have disappeared into oblivion, and there would have been no history of LSD. However, considering the discovery of LSD in the context of other significant discoveries of our time in the medicinal and technical field, one might arrive at the notion that LSD did not come into the world accidentally, but was rather evoked in the scope of some higher plan. In the 1940s the tranquilizers were discovered, a sensation for psychiatry. These constitute the precise pharmacological antipodes of LSD. As indicated by their name, they tranquilize and cover-up psychic problems; while LSD reveals them, thus making them accessible to therapeutic treatment. At about the same time nuclear energy became technically usable and the atomic bomb was developed. In comparison to traditional energy sources and weapons, a new dimension of menace and destruction became accessible. This corresponded to the potency-enhancement realized in the field of psychopharmaka, something like 1:5000 or 1:10,000-fold, comparing mescaline to LSD.

One could make the assumption that this coincidence might not be accidental, but rather was brought on the scene by the “Spirit of the Age.” From this perspective the discovery of LSD could hardly be an accident.

One might reflect on a further idea, that LSD might have been predestined by some higher power to arise precisely at the time when the predominance of materialism with all its consequences over the past 100 years was being understood. LSD as an enlightening psychopharmakon along the path to a new, spiritual age!

All of which could suggest that my decisions on arriving at the guiding "switch-points" which have led to LSD, were not really undertaken through exercise of free will, but rather steered by the subconscious, through which we are all connected with the universal, transpersonal consciousness.

But so much for the fateful aspect of LSD history, which has often engaged me mentally on to another chapter: LSD—completely personal. I should like to describe how, through LSD, I came directly or indirectly into personal relationship with two of the most important writers of our century, Aldous Huxley and Ernst Jünger, and to explain their views on the significance of psychedelic drugs in our time.

I had read some of the world-famous books by the great English-American writer and philosopher Aldous Huxley; his futuristic vision *Brave New World* [2] and the social novel *Point Counter Point* [3]. Especially meaningful for me were two books appearing in the 1950s, *The Doors of Perception* [4] and *Heaven and Hell* [5], in which Huxley described his experiences with mescaline. Both books contain fundamental contemplations on the essence of visionary experience and on the meaning of this type of world-view in cultural history. Huxley saw the value of psychedelic drugs in offering the possibility of experiencing extraordinary states of consciousness to people who do not possess the talent for visionary experience, which is the province of mystics, saints and great artists. For him these drugs were keys to allow the opening of new doors of perception; chemical keys beside other, proven but laborious "door openers" like meditation, solitude, fasting, or certain yoga practices.[6]

I gained a deeper insight and meaningful interpretation of my own LSD experiences from these two books by Huxley. I was therefore joyously surprised to receive a telephone call in the laboratory one morning in August 1961: "This is Aldous Huxley." He was passing through Zurich with his wife. He invited me and my wife to lunch in the Hotel Sonnenberg.

A gentleman with a yellow Fresia in his buttonhole, an exalted, nobel appearance with a gentle radiance—thus I recall Aldous Huxley from this first meeting. The table conversation revolved mainly around the question of magic drugs. Both Huxley and his wife Laura also had had experiences with LSD and psilocybin. Huxley did not call either of these substances or mescaline "drugs," since "drug" in English usage, as likewise with Droge in German, possesses a pejorative sense, and because he felt it important semantically to distinguish this type of active substance from other drugs.

Huxley felt there was little sense in experiments with hallucinogens, as the psychedelica or entheogens were mostly known at the time, under laboratory conditions, since the surroundings were of crucial importance. He recommended to my wife, when the conversation turned to her Bundnerland mountain home, that she take LSD in an alpine meadow, then gaze into the blue corolla of a gentian flower, there to behold the wonder of creation.

As we were taking our leave, Huxley gave me, as a memento of this meeting, a tape of the lecture "Visionary Experience" which he had delivered the week before at a psychology conference in Copenhagen. In this lecture he discoursed on the essence and meaning of

visionary experience and posited just such a world-view as a necessary supplement to the verbal and intellectual comprehension of reality.

During the following year a new, final book by Aldous Huxley appeared, the novel *Island*.[7] In this book he described the attempt, on the utopian island Pala, to fuse science and technical civilization with eastern wisdom into a new culture, in which reason and mysticism are fruitfully united. A magical drug called the moksha-medicine, obtained from a mushroom (moksha in Sanskrit means dissolution, liberation), plays an important role in the life of the population of Pala. Its use is restricted to decisive periods of life. Young men on Pala employ it in initiatory rites; it is dispensed in the course of psychotherapeutic dialogue during life crises; and for the dying it facilitates the abandonment of this mortal coil and the passage to another being.

Huxley sent me a copy of this book with the handwritten entry: "To Albert Hofmann, the original discoverer of the moksha-medicine, from Aldous Huxley." In one of the letters which I received from him, dated 29 February 1962, there is a sentence that seems to comprise for me a particularly important admonition: "Essentially this is what must be developed: the art of giving out in love and intelligence what is taken in from vision and the experience of self-transcendence and solidarity with the universe"

In late summer 1963 I was frequently in the company of Aldous Huxley in Stockholm at the annual meeting of the World Academy of Arts and Sciences. The progress of the negotiations in sessions of the Academy was imprinted by the content and form of his proposals and contributions to discussions. In keeping with the theme on which the conference was based, "World Resources," Huxley made the proposal of taking into consideration the subject of "Human Resources," the investigation and unfolding of capabilities innate in human beings, but unused. A humankind with highly-developed spiritual capacities, with expanded consciousness of the comprehensive wonder of being, would have to be more capable of observing and recognizing also the biological and material bases for its existence on this Earth. The development and unfolding of the ability sensually to experience reality directly, undisguised by words and concepts, would be of evolutionary significance, above all for Occidental humankind with such hypertrophied rationality. Huxley regarded the psychedelic drugs as an aid to training in this direction.

The English psychiatrist Humphry Osmond, who had coined the term psychedelic (mind-manifesting), was likewise taking part in the Congress, and supported Huxley with a report on meaningful possibilities of application of the psychedelica.

The symposium in Stockholm was my last meeting with Aldous Huxley. His appearance was already marked by his fatal disease, but his spiritual radiance remained undiminished. Aldous Huxley died on the 22nd of November 1963, the same day President Kennedy was assassinated. I received from Mrs. Laura Huxley a copy of her letter to Julian Huxley, in which she reported to her brother-in-law on the final day of her husband's life. The physicians had prepared her for a dramatic end, since in cancer of the esophagus, the terminal phase is usually accompanied by spasms and episodes of suffocation. He expired peacefully and quietly, however.

In the morning, when he was already so weak that he could no longer speak, he had written on a sheet of paper: "LSD—try it—intramuscular —100 mmg." Mrs. Huxley understood what he meant by this, and gave him the desired injection—she administered him the moksha-medicine. Mrs. Huxley also sent me a copy of this sheet of paper with the final handwriting expressing the last wish of this great man. Huxley had made personal use of what he had described in *Island*, application of the moksha-medicine as an aid to the great transition. His fervent mission on behalf of psychedelic drugs came to be resented, even by the majority of his friends and readers. Some say it cost him the Nobel Prize.

So much for Aldous Huxley; now for my relations with Ernst Jünger. I read my first book by this author, his diary from the First World War, *In Stahlgewittern* [8], as required reading in officer's school at the end of the 1920s. The second book by this author, which I acquired later, *Das Abenteuerliche Herz* [9], was a great surprise for me. How could the same author, who had described with thrilling, naked reality the horror of modern warfare in *In Stahlgewittern*, open the eyes of the reader with his prose, to the enchantment of simple things and the magic of everyday events? I still frequently pick up this book even after 50 years. Therein are descriptions of flowers, of animals, of dreams, of solitary walks; even thoughts on chance, on fortune, on colors and other themes which have a direct relationship to our personal lives. Here our eyes, which have become dulled by everyday habit, are again fully opened, and the omnipresent wonder, that is, the inexplicable, is made manifest in all its blessed, but sometimes even terrifying significance.

This reading often puts me in the mood to reflect on mystical experiences in childhood and on experiences with LSD inebriation. Jange's literary work has become a constant, spiritual companion in my life.

My personal relationship with Ernst Jünger derived from a package of provisions such as one could send to the needy population of Germany after the war. The acknowledgement in July 1947 of one such package constituted the commencement of a correspondence continuing to this day.

At first the topic of this was not drugs. In order to explain how LSD came into play, I must speak of my first self-experiments with this substance. Shortly after my first planned self-experiment with LSD in April 1943, which led to the discovery of its fantastic psychic activity, the first clinical investigations with LSD on voluntary subjects were conducted by coworkers in the medicinal-biological department [of Sandoz —Trans.]. The frequently multi-year-long toxicological tests which today must precede the investigation of a substance in human beings were foregone. After all, I had already withstood quite a strong dose without damage. Doses employed here corresponded to only a fifth or a tenth of the quantity employed in my pioneering experiment, that is, to 0.05 or 0.025 milligrams. Understandably I myself participated in this research, which was conducted between work in the laboratory. Thus I experienced quite drastically, what a crucial meaning the external setting, the environment, had for psychedelic experiments. In alterations of consciousness induced by LSD I experienced directly the coldness and unpleasantness of the technical world surrounding me, and my colleagues in their white laboratory coats appeared to pursue a meaningless occupation; the apparatus and equipment had a diabolical aspect, like little monsters from the pictures of Hieronymus Bosch. Thereby an other, strange, dream-like world intruded upon me from within. The interruptions for the psychological tests, with which we sought to give such research a scientific character, were perceived as downright tormenting. I realized that one completely missed the meaning and essence of psychedelic experiences in such an external setting.

I longed further to pursue the investigation of the properties of LSD in a musical atmosphere, in lovely surroundings and in stimulating company. I thought at once of Ernst Jünger. From our correspondence I knew that he had already experimented with mescaline. He immediately agreed to my suggestion that we conduct an LSD experiment together.

The great adventure took place at the beginning of February 1951. In order to have medical assistance at hand in the event it were needed, I asked my friend and colleague, the pharmacologist Professor Heribert Konzett, to participate in our undertaking. The trip took

place at ten o'clock in the morning in the living room of the house we had at the time in Bottmingen near Basel.

Since the reaction of such a highly sensitive man as Ernst Jünger was not predictable, a low dose was employed as a precautionary measure for this first experiment, only 0.05 milligrams. The experiment thus did not lead into great depths.

The initial phase was characterized by an intensification of aesthetic experience. The red-violet roses which adorned the room, adopted an undreamed of luminous power and radiated in portentous splendor. The concerto for flute and harp by Mozart was perceived in all its celestial glory as heavenly music. In mutual astonishment we beheld the smoky haze which arose with the ease of thought from a Japanese incense stick.

As the inebriation became deeper and the conversation lapsed, fantastic reveries overtook us, as we lounged with closed eyes in our armchairs. Jünger enjoyed the colored splendor of Oriental pictures; I was on a voyage with Berber tribes in North Africa, saw parti-colored caravans and lush oases. Konzett, whose features seemed transfigured Buddha-like, experienced a breath of timelessness, freedom from the past and the future, the blessing of being completely in the here and now.

This excursion was marked by the commonality and parallelness of our experiences, which we all perceived as deeply blessed. We had all three approached the portal to a mystical state of being; but the door had not opened. The dose selected had been too low. Misunderstanding this reason, Ernst Jünger, who had been thrust into deeper domains with a high dose of mescaline, opined that: "Compared with the tiger mescaline, your LSD is really only a house cat." He revised this opinion after further experiences with higher doses of LSD. The above-mentioned spectacle with the incense stick has been treated in a literary fashion by Jünger in his story "Besuch auf Godenholm" [10], in which he also plays with deeper experiences of drug inebriation. During the following years, I visited Ernst Jünger often in Wilflingen, whence he had moved from Ravensburg, or we met in Switzerland, at my home in Bottmingen or in Bundnerland. Our relationship became closer through the shared LSD experience. In our conversations and correspondence, drugs and questions connected with them formed a main theme, without at first having proceeded again to practical experimentation.

Here I should like to cite two short extracts from our correspondence of that time. In my letter of 16 December 1961 I had allowed: "A further disquieting thought which follows from the ability to influence the highest spiritual functions (consciousness) with minimal traces of a substance, involves free will. Highly potent psychotropic substances like LSD and psilocybin possess in their chemical structures a very close relationship to natural bodily substances which occur in the brain and play an important role in the regulation of its functions. It is thus thinkable, that through some such disturbance in metabolism a compound of the type of LSD or psilocybin is formed in place of a normal neurotransmitter, which can alter and determine the character, the personality, its worldview and its actions. A trace of a substance, whose occurrence or non-occurrence in our bodies we cannot control with our wills, is capable of determining our fate." Such biochemical considerations might have led to the sentence written by Gottfried Benn in his essay "Provoziertes Leben" [11]: "God is a substance, a drug!" Standing out above all in the reply from Ernst Jünger, in his letter of 27 December 1961, is: "[present circumstances] insinuate[] that we are beginning to develop procedures in biology, just like those in the field of physics, that can no longer be conceived of as progress in the established sense, but which rather intervene in evolution and lead beyond the development of the species. I suspect that this is a new era, that begins to work on the evolution of types. Our science with its theories and inventions is thereby not the cause, but rather one of the consequences of evolution! Wine has already altered much,

has brought with it new gods and a new humanity. But wine stands in relation to the new substances like LSD, as classical to modern physics. These substances should be tried only in small groups. I cannot agree with the idea of Huxley's, that hereby the masses can be given possibilities for transcendence. This does not involve comforting fictions, but rather realities, if we take the matter seriously, and few contacts suffice to lay roads and connections." Jünger here advocates the opinion that a new consciousness cannot be expanded through mass consumption of psychedelica, this must rather happen to an elite. We have since complemented such theoretical discussions on magical drugs with practical experiments. One such, which served for the comparison of LSD with psilocybin, took place in the spring of 1962. The following session happened in the Jünger house, in the erstwhile forester's home of the Stauffenberg's castle in Wilflingen.

Besides my above-mentioned friend, the pharmacologist Heribert Konzett, the Islamic scholar Rudolf Gelpke likewise took part in this psilocybin symposium. Gelpke had already made experiments with LSD and psilocybin obtained directly from Sandoz, which have been described under the title *On Travels in the Universe of the Soul* [12].

It was mentioned in the ancient chronicles how the Aztecs drank cacahuatl or chocolate before they ate teonanacatl. In harmony with this Mrs. Liselotte Jünger likewise served us hot chocolate. Then she abandoned the four psychonauts [13] to their fate.

We were gathered in a massive living room with a dark wooden floor, white tile stove and period furniture. On the walls hung old French engravings, on the table stood a magnificent bouquet of tulips. Jünger wore a long, broad, dark-blue-striped kaftan-like garment which he had brought from Egypt; Konzett was resplendent in a parti-colored Mandarin gown; Gelpke and I had put on housecoats. The everyday should also be set aside even in the external sense. Shortly before sundown we took the drug, not the mushrooms but rather their active principle, 20 mg of psilocybin each. This corresponded to some two-thirds of the very strong dose which the famous curandera Maria Sabina was accustomed to take in the form of Psilocybe mushrooms.

After an hour I still felt only a slight effect, while my fellows were already deeply into the trip. I had the hope that in the mushroom inebriation it would be possible for me to allow again to become vivid certain images from moments in my childhood, which remained with me as blessed events in my memory: the meadow of flowers lightly stirred by the early summer wind; the rosebush after the thunderstorm in the evening light; or the blue irises over the vineyard wall. However I did not succeed with this willfully directed imagination. When the mushroom principle finally began to work, in place of these luminous images from my home country, weird scenery emerged. Half-stunned I sank ever deeper, passed through moribund cities with a Mexican character, of exotic, though deathly splendor. Terrified, I sought to hold myself on the surfaces, to concentrate consciously on the exterior world. I succeeded in this once in a while. Then I saw Jünger colossal, pacing back and forth across the room; an enormous, mighty magician. Konzett in his silky, glistening house coat appeared to me to be a dangerous Chinese clown. Even Gelpke seemed eerie to me, long, thin, mysterious! The deeper I sank into the inebriation, the stranger everything became. The cities I traversed when I closed my eyes lay in a morbid light, weird, cold, senseless, empty of humanity. When I opened my eyes and sought to fasten myself onto the external world, even the surroundings seemed to me to be senseless, spectral. The total void threatened to plunge me into absolute nothingness. I remember how I grasped ahold of Gelpke's arm and held him to me when he passed by my chair, in order not to sink into dark nothingness. Fear of death seized me, and an endless yearning to return to the living creation, to the reality of the human world.

At last I came back to the room. I saw and heard the great magician lecture uninterruptedly with a loud voice, reporting on Schopenhauer, Kant, Hegel and the old Ga, the little mother. Gelpke and Konzett were already back on the Earth, on which I again set foot wearily.

It was past midnight, when we sat together at the table which the woman of the house had set on the upper floor. We celebrated our return with a sumptuous repast and Mozart's music. The conversation about our experiences lasted well into the morning.

The above-described research protocol was included in my LSD book, *LSD: My Problem Child* [14] published by Klett-Cotta in 1979 and reprinted in 1993, as a 50th anniversary celebration, in a DTV pocket book. Ernst Jünger has described this symposium from his vantage point in his 1970 Klett book, *Annaherunge—Drogen und Rausch* [15].The mushroom substance had conducted the four of us, not to the luminous heights, but to deeper regions.

Both are part of our existence. Only when we are conversant with both, heaven and hell, is our life full and rich; and it is fuller and richer the more deeply we experience both. The psychedelic experience can lead us to the deepest depths and the highest heights, to the boundaries of that which humankind is capable of experiencing. Jünger gave his book on drugs and inebriation the title *Approaches*, approaches even to these boundaries, and he has also described himself as a "boundary walker" [Grenzganger] [16]. He has repeatedly approached both boundaries: proximity to death in battle in the hell of modern warfare, and the ecstasy of the most exalted delight and love in the perception of the wonder and the beauty of creation.

In conclusion, just a small anecdote that connects me with Ernst Jünger and LSD. Jünger told me that a stranger once called him in the middle of the night and told him that now he finally knew what LSD meant. LSD means: love seeks you [Liebe sucht dich].

References and Translator's Notes

1. Although in 1993 there were extensive celebrations of the 50th anniversary of LSD, this was actually the 55th anniversary of its synthesis, and on 16 November 1998 we ought celebrate the 60th anniversary of its discovery—Trans.

2. Huxley, A. (1932). *Brave New World*. New York: Harper.
3. Huxley, A. (1930). *Point Counter Point*. New York: Harper.
4. Huxley, A. (1954). *The Doors of Perception*. New York: Harper.
5. Huxley, A. (1955). *Heaven and Hell*. London: Chatto and Windus.

6. Whereas Huxley seemed to think the chemical keys to religious experiences were somehow inferior, citing De FZlice who called them "inferior forms of mysticism," the advancement in entheobotanical research since Huxley's day has put the shoe on the other foot. The work of Wasson, La Barre, Furst and others has shown clearly that modern religions derived from shamanism, whose essence is visionary experience primordially catalyzed by entheogenic plants. That entheogenic drugs evoke genuine religious experiences is beyond doubt, since the religions themselves derived from this. It is rather incumbent on proponents of artificial routes to ecstasy such as meditation and yoga to demonstrate that these techniques can evoke genuine religious experiences—Trans.

7. Huxley, A. (1962). *Island*. New York: Harper.
8. Jünger, E. (1920). *In Stahlgewittern*. Self-published.
9. Jünger, E. (1930). *Das abenteuerliche Herz*. Berlin: Mittler.
10. Jünger, E. (1952). "Besuch auf Godenholm." Frankfurt: Klostermann.

11. Benn, G. (1949). "Provoziertes Leben."In: *Ausdruckswelt, Essays und Aphorismen*. Wiesbaden, Limes Verlag. Translated by Ralph Metzner (1963). "Provoked life." *Psychedelic Review* 1: 47-54.
12. Gelpke, R. (1962). *Von Fahrten in den Weltraum der Seele: Berichte-ber Selbstversuche mit Delysid (LSD) und Psilocybin (cy). Antaios* 3(5): 393-411. Translated by Jonathan Ott (1981). *On travels in the universe of the soul: Reports on self-experiments with Delysid (LSD) and psilocybin (cy). Journal of Psychoactive Drugs* 13(1): 81-89.
13. The term psychonaut was coined in 1970 by Ernst Jünger to describe psychic voyagers who use entheogens as their vehicles. See: 15 below—Trans.
14. Hofmann, A. (1979). *LSD: Mein Sorgenkind*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta. Translated by Jonathan Ott (1980). *LSD: My problem child*. New York: McGraw-Hill; (1985). Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher.
15. Jünger, E. (1970). *Annaherungn—Drogen und Rausch*. Stuttgart: E. Klett Verlag.
16. Jünger, E. (1966). *Grenzgunge: Essays, Reden, Träume*. Stuttgart: E. Klett Verlag.

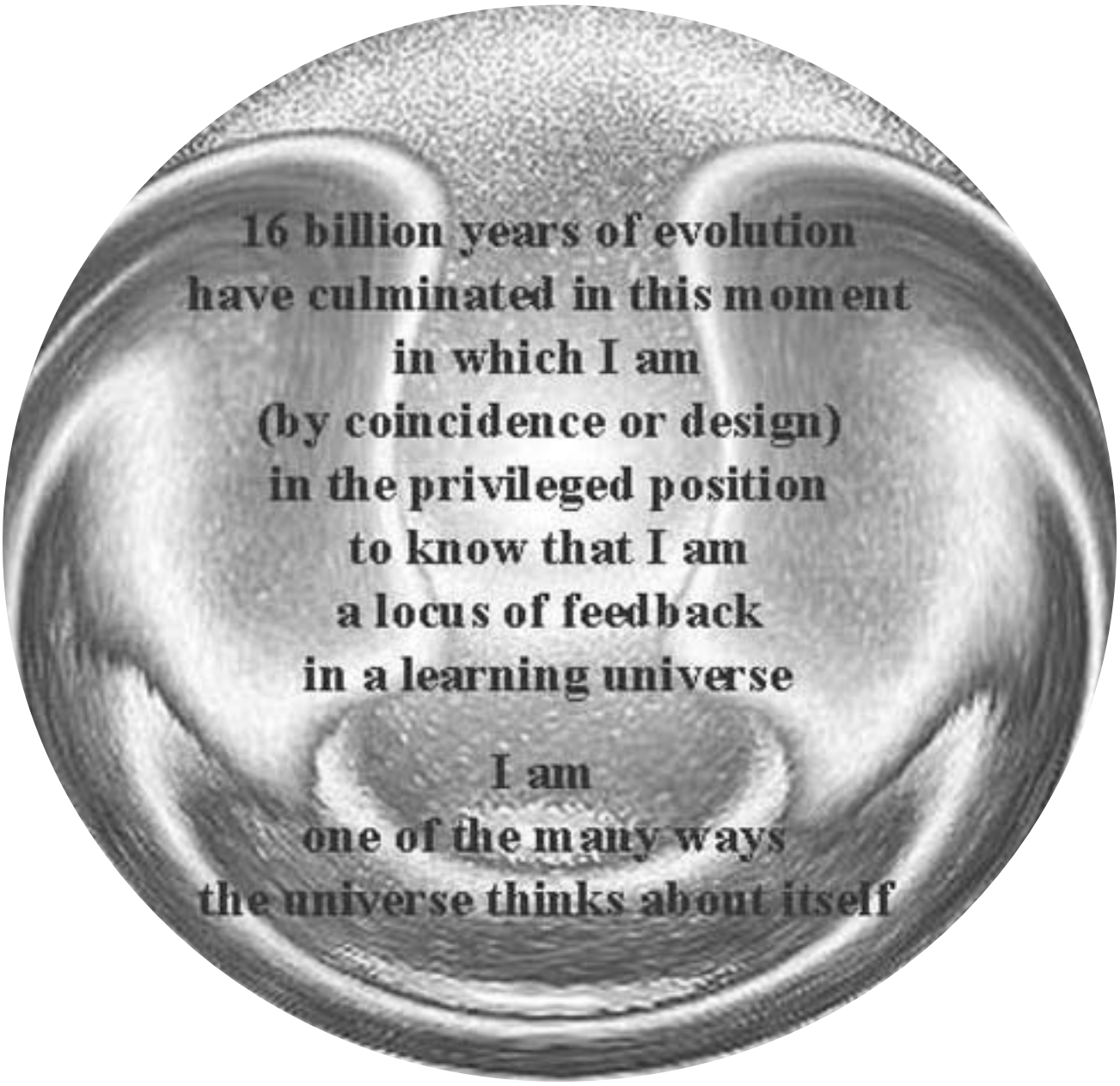
NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

Ric Amante lives in Detroit, Michigan. He writes poetry, spies on birds, and sips red wine to consider the possible, and improbable, with equal verve....

Barbara Brannon lives in Wilmington, North Carolina. She might have thought the next issue of this periodical would never come about, but if she did she kept mum to encourage me.

Dr. Albert Hofmann lives in Switzerland. In 1943, he synthesized LSD-25 & went on a magical bicycle ride into history. Nothing's been the same since. Bless him.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Portland, Oregon. There is no real explanation for him anymore.


16 billion years of evolution
have culminated in this moment
in which I am
(by coincidence or design)
in the privileged position
to know that I am
a locus of feedback
in a learning universe
I am
one of the many ways
the universe thinks about itself

Lighten up, man!